CHAPTER 4

Theoretical Approaches: Studying the Roles of Women in Films, Feminism and Psychoanalysis.

Bollywood films have had an eponymous lifespan. It stands to be repeatedly resurrected in its original authentic form or is completely transmogrified and reassembled through various modes of circulation, percolating into public consciousness in its own ingenious ways. Filmic text on Bollywood has certainly moved on from its continuous ‘paralyzing historicism’ (Dhareshwar, 1996) to something more surreal. Theorizing film studies has always been a problematic area since a host of linguistic and psychoanalytic readings project the most amorphous of theories. Precious insight of the text and its relationship to reality is what is lost in the process of amalgamating content with the theory. At the same time on cannot neglect ‘the vagaries of the Oedipal scenario’ says Lalitha Gopalan but also look into the analysis of particular genres. From its earliest beginnings, popular cinema has negotiated the role of women on and off the silver screen “in fact underscoring its centrality to various narrative and generic pattern, violence against women has been conceptualized as eminent in classic Hollywood cinema”1 and this is what we find across in our own commercial films.

Feminism and Films: Cinematic Apparatus and Psychoanalysis.

Feminists regard cinema to be culturally representing myths about men and femininity as well as about men and masculinity. The stereotyping of women mostly in Hollywood films were the main issues involving early feminist criticism. The 1970's show the emergence of feminist film theory, which relies on “the notion of a cinematic apparatus through which film technologies interacted with the ideological determinants of the cinematic institutions and the psychodynamics of the viewers.” 2 Classical narrative cinema repeatedly reinstated the Oedipal drama from the masculine, tracking the hero from his tearful separation from his mother to his triumphal unification with the paternal authority. But as our own films depict visuals, classical films defined gender more emphatically through visuals of physical and emotional violence.

Arguably in her most seminal work, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975), Laura Mulvey studied the problem of female erotic in classic Hollywood cinema. Realizing that the call of positive imaging of women were just not enough to change the underlying structures in films, critiques moved on to investigate the overwhelming power of patriarchal imagery. We cannot
deny the contribution of semiotics and psychoanalysis through which structuralistic frameworks proved the necessity in understanding gender stereotypes encoded in our films. According to Mulvey, there was a choice for female viewers to identify either with the male protagonist or secondary female characters who in Freudian terms are defined by the lack (or castration) .../.../... Sexual in origin Mulvey claims is what attracts the spectator to the silver screen. As Mulvey herself wrote on the melodrama, we witness everyday on our screens “there is a dizzy satisfaction in witnessing the way that sexual difference under patriarchy is fraught, explosive and explodes into violence in its own private stomping ground, the family.” For her, violence is grounded in sexual differences manifested in both film narratives and a viewing process that situates popular cinema squarely in a patriarchal society. “Voyeuristic visual pleasure is produced by looking at another (character, figure, situation), as our object, whereas narcissistic visual pleasure can be derived from self identification with the (figure in the) image.” However Sudhir Kakar says “no sane Indian believes that Hindi film depict the world realistically.” However, viewers still turn to these movies because “Hindi film emphasizes the central features of fantasy- the fulfillment of wishes, the humbling of competitors and the destruction of enemies.” Invisible is the overriding acceptance that women in our society will be followers of a system of rule not set by them. The position of women in Indian films seems to be what Mulvey had proposed five decades back. Banerjee (1981), states that it was found that in most cases whether in the films or in the society, women were the victims.

Mulvey analyzed the scopophilia in cinema as a structure, which interplays on the axis of activity and passivity. The binary opposition being gendered, it is the narrative structure of traditional cinema, which establishes the male character as active and powerful. He is the circle of life around which the entire drama unfolds and the ‘look gets organized’. As Katz (1999), argues that as men’s bodies begin to get bigger, women’s bodies continue to shrink. Women are expected to be thin in order to look desirable whereas men are to become the muscular Adonis variety and therefore become more violent. This is what Johnston meant by women being represented as ‘not-man’. Claire Johnston a first among feminist critics to offer a sustained critique of stereotypes from a semiotic point of view constructed the ideological image of women.

Drawing on Roland Barthes notion of ‘myth’, she investigated the subject of ‘woman’ in classical cinema. The sign ‘woman’ was analysed as a structural convention. It represented the ideological meaning that ‘woman’ has for men. In relation to herself she means no-thing. The ‘woman-as woman’ is absent from the text of the film. The important theoretical shift is
from an understanding of cinema as reflecting reality to a view of cinema as constructing a particular ideological view of reality became a framework for all film theorists globally. Cinema in general never really shows us its means of production and therefore veils its ideological construction. It has consciously developed narratives to portray the images of 'woman' as natural, realistic, desirable and attractive. This is the illusion of celluloid fantasy.

**Theorising the Cinematic Gaze in Films: Narratives and Visual Structures.**

In this respect the visual mediaperfects the machinery suitable for male desire such as the already established structured canonization in the tradition of western art and aesthetics. Mulvey has disentangled the way in which narrative and visual techniques make voyeurism into an exclusively male prerogative. Within this narrative of the film male characters direct their gaze towards female characters. Spectators are made to identify with the male look because the camera films from the optical, as well as libidinal point of view of the male character.

Thus are the three levels of cinematic gaze (camera, character and spectator) that objectify the female character and make her into a spectacle. In classical cinema, voyeurism connotes women as 'to-be-looked-at-ness.' Mulvey explains the concept of narcissistic visual pleasure with Lacan's theory of ego formation and the mirror stage. The way in which a child derives satisfaction from the identification with the prefect mirror image and forms its ego-ideal on the basis of this idealized image, 'is analogous to the way in which the viewer derives narcissistic pleasure from identifying with the perfected image of a human figure on the screen'. In both cases however, during the mirror stage and in cinema, identifications are not a lucid form of self-knowledge or awareness. They are rather base on what Lacan calls 'méconnaissance' (a mis-recognition), meaning that they are blurred by the very narcissistic forces that structure them in the first place.

Ego formations are structured by imaginary functions and cinema follows the same path. Metz worked on the same analogy around the same time period and essayed his thoughts on the intermittent relations of psychoanalysis and cinema. It is assumed that with the exception of women's pictures, “the cinema constructs its spectator as the generic ‘of language.’" It contains built in patterns of pleasure and identity that 'impose masculinity as the point-of-view' (Mulvey 1975). The eyes see so much and have taken on a power of their own via 'the gaze'. The power that the dominating gaze holds imitates our societal structure. The gaze that we use not only in instances of
the real but in films as well represents our individual structures. Several feminist film theorists have come up with their own definitions of the gaze that began its entrance into cinema in the late 80's and early 90's. Originators like Laura Mulvey and Mary Anne Doane, saw the power of the eye and the impact that it had on society. Others to follow, like Judith Mayne and Constance Penley, took it one step further and redirected the question from a different perspective. Several theories on the gaze that some of these scholars followed will show the foundation that has been built because of the many feminisms and where the Western world's current feminist filmmakers have their origins. Since we lack that privileged space, we will use these theories to define the roles of women in the four films selected for the study. These theories are but some of the ones that one discovers while looking into the worlds of Film and Women's Studies.

Laura Mulvey began the questioning in her book and essay, "Visual and Other Pleasures." She approached the cinematic apparatus from the point of view of Freud and Lacan and giving a definition to the woman as an object. Mulvey states, "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness.11 Mulvey's main question was, how could women's film-viewing pleasures be understood?

Mary Ann Doane, felt that the female viewer was in a role of cross-gender identification that caused a distance with the text. She saw woman as wearing a costume in a sense. Chris Straayer quotes, in 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator' where she argues that, because woman's pre-oedipal bond with the mother continues to be strong throughout her life (unlike man's), the female viewer - unless she utilizes artificial devices - is unable to achieve that distance from the film's textual body which allows man the process of voyeurism: "For the female spectator there is a certain over-presence of the image—she is the image."12 This is where the woman becomes narcissistic. Doane offers a way for woman to distance herself from the image - through the masquerade of femininity.

**Identifications in Cinema: Bodies and Spectatorship.**

Since the mirror phase can be understood as the primary identification of the subject, it would seem that it could valuably be used as a model for the understanding of cinematic identification. And this is precisely what Metz does. However, there is an essential difference between the mirror phase and the situation of the cinema. Anything may be "reflected" on the screen except
the spectator's own body. Since the spectator cannot identify with his own image, Metz poses the question, "With what does the spectator identify?" 13 Metz briefly considers the possibility of identification with a character, but rejects it because character identification can only take place in the case of the narrative-representational film. Since Metz is interested in the "psychoanalytic constitution of the signifier of the cinema as such," 14 these identifications, when they occur, must be secondary. But in the viewing of any kind of film, the spectator understands that he can simply close his eyes in order for the film to disappear — that he is, in a sense, the condition of the possibility of the film. The projector behind him and the camera before it are also recognized as conditions of the possibility of the film and the "looks" of all three coincide (they all face in the same direction). Metz concludes that the primary cinematic identification is the spectator's identification with his own look and, consequently, an identification with the camera. This is, most importantly, an identification of the viewing subject as a "pure act of perception."

Metz's description of primary cinematic identification here rejoins contemporary film theory's obsession with assigning the spectator a position — a project that brings to bear on its object such Freudian concepts as scopophilia/exhibitionism, fetishism, and the meta-psychology of dreaming. The spectatorial position described by film theorists is not a geographical but an epistemological position, one, which dictates a particular relationship between subject and object. Coherency of vision insures a controlling knowledge, which, in its turn, is a guarantee of the untroubled centrality and unity of the subject.

All of these concepts utilized by the discourse of positionality in film theory rest upon the assumption that the spectator's investment in the film is based upon the activity of misrecognition. The spectator mistakenly identifies discourse as history, representation as perception, fiction as reality. And the film is described as promoting this misrecognition, exploiting its pleasurable effects. For the pleasure of misrecognition ultimately lies in its confirmation of the subject's mastery over the signifier, its guarantee of a unified and coherent ego capable of controlling the effects of the unconscious. This is, essentially, a guarantee of the subject's identity: Thus, there is a sense in which the concepts of scopophilia/exhibitionism, fetishism, and the dreamer/spectator are subsumed beneath that of primary cinematic identification. Primary cinematic identification entails not only the spectator's identification with the camera but also his identification of himself as the condition of the possibility of what is perceived on the screen.
The entire cinematic apparatus as the site of an organization positions the film viewer, according to Metz, — the viewer lends coherence to the image and is simultaneously posited as a coherent entity. It has been argued elsewhere that there are difficulties with Metz's use of the mirror analogy—most acutely in his obsession with locating a primal scene for the cinema, an original grounding event which would accurately define or delineate spectatorship. A corollary of this difficulty concerns the conceptualization of identification as instantaneous — a conceptualization which presupposes an undialectical notion of temporality in the film viewing process. Metz upholds the priority of a before/after distinction — the look of the spectator is the originary moment within his system. Finally, identification cannot be located solely in the axis of the look. Yet, Metz's emphasis upon primary identification isolates the image as the determinant cinematic unit and bestows upon perception the quality of immediacy. It is this immediacy imputed to the process of identification, which needs to be questioned along with the strict separation effected between primary and secondary identification.

Nevertheless, it seems that the strength of Metz's analogy between the cinema and the mirror phase makes it resistant, in some way to these objections — gives it a truth whose form might be compared with that accorded by Freud to the neurotic obsession. For the model of the screen as a mirror holds a certain fascination — not only "outside" the cinema, in its theorization, but within it as well. The use of a mirror within a scene strikes us as almost automatically constituting an "insight" about the cinema itself. For it aligns the cinema with specular identification, which, while it, may not be mechanically and formally linked to the structure of a founding "look," is nevertheless a strong constituent of the classical cinema. The idea of the mirror and its force in the imaginary of film theory — despite the fact that it privileges the visual signifier over the auditory, the moment over temporality — can be linked to the notion of visual captivation by an image, facilitated in the cinema by the darkness of the surrounding auditorium and the immobility of the spectator.

The very brilliance of the screen draws the eye. Identification, from this perspective, is inseparable from narcissism or the drama of the ego, which the mirror implies. In its primary form identification is quite simply, as Lacan points out, the process of assuming an image: We have only to understand the mirror stage as an identification, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image — whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of the ancient term 'imago'.
The transformation effected in the mirror phase is that from a fragmented body image to an image of totality, unity, and coherency. Hence, it is not so much tied to the empirical event of seeing oneself reflected in a mirror as to the ability to conceptualize the body as a limited form. As Laplanche points out, the earliest identification is "an identification with a form conceived of as a limit, or a sack: a sack of skin." Freud's description of narcissism rests on a reference to the treatment of one's own body as a sexual object. Furthermore, Freud sees incorporation and introjection as prototypes of identification when "the mental process is experienced and symbolised as a bodily one (ingesting, devouring, keeping something inside oneself, etc.)."

An image of the body anchors the ego, which in its turn is the point of articulation of identification. Any "body" can be used as a mirror — but in psychoanalytical theory it is most frequently, and significantly, the body of the mother. In identification, the 'other' — whether person or image — is used as a relay, a kind of substitute to conceal the fact that the subject can never fully coincide with it. The function of primary identification is, therefore, to establish an outline, a boundary between inside and outside — to trace the form of a unity capable of operating as a desiring subject (Laplanche speaks of the ego as "indeed an object, but a kind of relay object), capable of passing itself off, in a more or less deceptive and usurpatory manner, as a desiring and wishing subject."

While Metz distinguishes between primary and secondary cinematic identification, Laura Mulvey, on the other hand, in her article on "Visual Pleasure," leaves room for the possibility of articulating a common space within which both primary and secondary identification operate. In fact, in her argument primary identification is from the beginning inflected by, overlaid by secondary identification.

One of the most important concerns of psychoanalytic theories of identification has been to define the role it plays in group formation and the socialization of the individual. The spectator examined by film theorists is one who has been extracted and isolated from the group, the viewing audience. Once we return to some of the intricacies of the theories of identification, it soon becomes clear that "identification" is involved, is the term for, not a singular but a doubled concept. For "identification" names both a process and its effect, the "subject effect," which it produces.

To confuse the two, to conflate the conditioned effect with its preconditions, is to create a screen memory of the psychoanalysis of identification. To say that identification is the precondition of the
understanding of a film is to commit this same error. Identification is related to understanding, but not hierarchically as cause to effect. Rather both are constituted as effects of a process of deferring the recognition of difference. Identity is not of the order of the Real as those who conflate the two meanings of "identification" must, in the end, assert, but of the Symbolic and the Imaginary.

Cinematic identification has been described virtually exclusively as being of the order of the Imaginary. It is defined by analogy with Lacan's mirror phase, that is, the period of the construction of the Imaginary, in which the subject's ego is formed according to an image, which she perceives outside, and alien to herself. There is one difference, however, between the cinematic and the premiere performance before the mirror. The cinematic spectacle is missing one of its principals. As Christian Metz is the best-known and most articulate proponent of this line of analysis, to quote him: "The spectator is absent from the screen: contrary to the child in the mirror, he cannot identify with himself as an object, but only with some objects which are there without him. In this sense the screen is not a mirror. At the cinema, it is always the other who is on the screen; as for me, I am there to look at him. I take no part in the perceived, on the contrary, I am all perceiving... because I am entirely on the side of the perceiving instance: absent from the screen, but present in the auditorium."18

But although it is necessary to be reminded that Lacan has used the physical apparatus of the mirror as a metaphor and that, in fact, the infant can and does assume another child's image as her own — it is not sufficient. It is not only that the subject locates her own image in another, but also that she locates the other in her own. As Grace Kelley watches Dial M for Murder, or Mimi the opera, in La Bohème, it is not fully she, her own image that is returned to her. The "own image" which Metz finds missing from its place on the screen has been irretrievably lost by psychoanalysis which has challenged the notions of identity, self-presence, continuity on which analogical/metaphorical thinking is based. The mirror phase itself introduces a structure, the Symbolic, which will become the foreign agent of this challenge.

Psychoanalysis, in its theorizing of the primal scene away from the visible, has examined the construction of identity by means of a process which defers it, and the construction of a present by a process always premature or tardy with respect to it. When Freud says that hysterics suffer from reminiscences, he is not referring to memories of past presences, but to experiences, which were never present as such. Analysis works not by
uncovering the analogue, which was the cause of a symptom, but by examining symptoms as effects, repetitions of symbolic structures. But where many film theoretical issues have advanced through the study of film as a signifying system which produces rather than simply reflecting or preserving meaning, the concept of identification has simply limped behind.

Film theory has maintained a traditional understanding of identification as the establishing of an analogous identity of one individual with another and describes it as such by means of an analogy with the mirror phase which is itself an analogy. Box-logic, this; but the returns of such an economy are great. The cinematic theorist, like the spectator and like the child before the mirror, has reason to be jubilant, transcendant, because he has globally ingested the world of the film. Underlying the process of identification, which Freud links to the oral phase of the libido's development, there is surely such a fantasy of incorporation. The fantasy that one has inside, an interiority that it contains and that preserves the self. Yet Freud was himself never satisfied with his analysis of identification. His attempt, In Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, to systematize, his taxonomy of three, has its own problems. The first type of identification is the primal form of an emotional tie with an object, the tie between the pre-Oedipal boy and his father, has clear theoretical limitations. For it relies on a direct and immediate perception of resemblance, before any such resemblance can be constructed. Identification is thus described as cause, as precondition of the Oedipus complex. Although Freud himself notes the problematic nature of this type of identification, he does not abandon it, but keeps it here in this originary position, as uncaused cause.

After this, the second: identification is here described as the regressive replacement for an abandoned object choice. This second type indexes Freud's most sustained theoretical analysis of an abandoned object choice, developed a few years earlier in Mourning and Melancholia. Here clearly, identification does not square with analogy, is not a cause, a precondition, but an effect. Identification is not between a subject and an object, which is present to it, but is a result of the loss of an object.

Against this definition of identification as an adding onto the subject, we must begin an analysis of identification as a placement of the subject with respect to the text. It is in the context of this problematic of identification, which has begun to shift its terrain from the Imaginary to the Symbolic, that the images of women in, popular cinema are generally placed. For the film is defined by the very parameters of this shift and poses many of the same questions as its instigation. While, the reflection of the "mirror-phase" is
everywhere visible in it, with the figures peering into, sitting beside, imaged in mirrors, the film bears little resemblance to the kind of system imagined by Metz’s article. The relationship of camera to screen is not one of casting light upon in a stream of look. Camera movement is often strongly marked as belonging to someone and thus someone other than the spectator and at one point actually casts a shadow on the scene, which is already and always heavily shadowed throughout the film.

These are scenes, which are empty of reflective mirror light, scenes onto which the "shadow of the object" has fallen. If we are to understand identification here it will have to be in terms of melancholia rather than mirrors. Almost immediately the film poses the question of identification, for let’s face it, Mimi, the protagonist, is dead, and the possibility of identification in any traditional sense, difficult. I refer to this here because a similar situation arises in Laawaris, one of the films that have been analyzed. Identification instead is a relationship set up by a lost object, a symbolic post-Oedipal interchange and the Imaginary's role one of consistence rather than pre-existence.

It is, in fact, quite enlightening to note the similarities in structure between the dramas of Oedipus and Thriller. Both are moved through protagonists with whom it is impossible to identify in any direct, immediate, or total sense. Where our argument is that this is always the case, these dramas, rather than obscure the fact, confront it directly as part of their strategy. Mimi, as we have said, is dead and Oedipus has committed parrincest. These two deeds, in deed, parrincest and death, mark from the outside the exact borders, the outposts, of the Symbolic and it is these two deeds which mark the Real outside of their respective dramas, for each of the two are constructed from two different narratives, the narrative of the crime (which remains outside/the Real) and the narrative of the investigation (which is its symbolic performance). The first, which instigates the second (which is made present by the second) is a never present past, a traumatic event that was never experienced as such. Oedipus, not knowing who his real parents were, did not experience the trauma of murdering of that man and the marrying of that woman, his father and mother. And since it is the peculiar nature of death that it can only be experienced vicariously, we can say that Mimi never experienced the trauma of her own death, just as Vidya as the unwed mother of Hira. It will be noticed that the description of these dramas follows the general description of the detective/thriller genre: Two narratives, one of the crime, the other of the investigation.
Coming back to the thrust of Mulvey's argument is that, in patriarchal society, this kind of misrecognition and this kind of identity are, quite simply, not available to the woman. Her discussion deals only with the male spectator (as articulated in the use of the pronoun "he") and, by implication, situates female spectatorship as the locus of an impossibility. Mulvey's division of the classical text into two components, spectacle and narrative, and her correlation of these tendencies with the psychical mechanisms of scopophilia and identification with an ego ideal, supports her analysis of the cinematic representation of woman as a form of reassurance of male mastery. Built into the mode of seeing legalized by the classical text is the exclusion of the feminine. It is necessary to relate the problematic of identification outlined above to that of sexual difference and its inscription in the cinema in the terms of its address. Secondary identification, in its classical description, is clearly compatible with, fully implicated in the mechanisms of patriarchal society.

Doane summarizes the female spectator's position as the viewer adopting the masculine position in relation to the cinematic sign, where the female is left with two options, "the masochism of over identification or the narcissism entailed in becoming one's own object of desire, in assuming the image in the most radical way. The effectivity of masquerade lies precisely in its potential to manufacture a distance from the image, to generate a problematic within the image is manipulable, producible, and readable to woman."19

Judith Mayne, in "The Woman at the Keyhole", takes the gaze further and approaches the gaze from a "keyhole" perspective that was prevalent in early cinema and still show a presence in current film. She states, "For when we imagine a 'woman' and a 'keyhole', it is usually a woman on the other side of the keyhole, as the proverbial object of the look, that comes to mind.... but rather asking...what happens when women are situated in both sides of the keyhole. The question is not only who or what is on either side of the keyhole, but also what lies between them, what constitutes the threshold that makes representation possible."20

It has been argued that gender orientation is purely a product of the values imposed by society and that it is far from being natural in an 'essential' sense. As Suzanne Moore, in "Here's Looking at You Kid" argues, "advocated the idea that sexuality is socially constructed rather than God-given and immutable. Hence, femininity and masculinity are processes in a state of constant negotiation, not static categories from which there is no escape." 21
Phallocentrism is the name that is given to the patriarchal language through which sexuality is defined (phallus centered). Psychoanalysis provides certain tools with which to deconstruct it, but it is questionable as to whether it would ever be possible to step outside phallocentric language itself. Within this language, woman is defined according to the Freudian concept of lack. While man is caught up in the clutches of the Oedipus complex, woman is trapped by the Electra complex – which is defined by ‘lack.’ From the masculine point of view, she represents a bleeding wound and the threat of castration. Woman is the object of a Look that is built upon a kind of panic about possible loss. Principally, her presence represents a certain lack of presence. Ultimately, she is caught up in a nexus of representation, whose logic is defined by male anxiety. She is never wholly present for herself, but only ‘appears’ as the representation of a lack. However, the integrity and the fullness of presence of masculinity are, in turn, dependent upon this impoverishment of the meaning of woman.

As Mulvey writes,

*The paradox of phallocentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world. The idea of woman stands as linchpin to the system; it is her lack that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence; it is her desire to make good the lack that the phallus signifies.*

Film could be considered a language of its own, but the language that it uses still symbolizes the same binary order that has dominated our society with its phallocentric perspective. Recently, women have, finally, broken through the male-dominated film industry to further film study and analyze the dominant views of women in films as the subject. She has even reached past the mirror of awareness of her exploitation and has settled on the semiotics that foregrounds the language that film speaks. Unfortunately women have spoken this phallocentric language for centuries. American feminists continue their struggle for liberation from the male gaze and want to use the female gaze. French feminists have come to the conclusion that addressing the use of the dominant language will begin a multiplicity of languages. French feminists have decided that women have the capability to construct a new language.

Over the last two decades, and especially during the 1990s, writers on film have reoriented the critical frameworks and revised the categories by which cinema generally and film violence specifically can be interrogated and understood. The richness of much of this writing derives from a willingness to
reexamine, question, and subvert longstanding assumptions underlying conventional accounts of film violence; concerns ranging from otherness and sacrifice to censorship, cultural specificity, and conceptions of violence itself have thus been reconsidered. Collectively, the variety and quality of recent critical efforts have constituted a second golden age, after that of the late 60s and early 70s, of film-violence scholarship. During that period, of course, Bollywood paralleled the counterculture's challenges to traditional social standards and values by creating scenes of increasing violence that culminated in films that are emblematic for many of the era's imagining of individual and social violence.

Mulvey repeatedly argues that cinematic identifications were structured along the lines of sexual difference. Representation of the “more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego” of the, male hero stands in stark opposition to the distorted image of the passive and insecure female character. Hence the spectator relies his/her hopes with the male rather than the female character in the film. The spectator assumes the “voyeuristic position and the female body is rendered as a spectacle with phallic significance which in turn is used to ‘assuage the male spectators fear of castration.” The power that the dominating gaze holds imitates our societal structure. Our individual structures are represented by the gaze that we use.

**Women, Cinema and Visual Pleasure: The Formative Structure in Films.**

Therefore there are two dimensions in visual pleasure, which are negotiated through sexual difference, the voyeuristic- scopophilic gaze and narcissistic identifications. ‘Both these formative structures depend for their meaning upon the controlling power of the male character’. In fact, according to Mulvey, in psychoanalytic terms the image of ‘woman’ is essentially in consonance with attraction and seduction in an evocation of castration anxiety. Because her appearance also reminds the male subject of the lack of a penis the female character is a source of deeper fears. Cinema has solved the threat of castration through it narratives or through fetishism. Fetishism “is a phallic defense which allows the subject to distance himself from the implications of the object of desire in relation to castration through the overvaluation of a mediating substitute object.” To allay the threat of castration on the level of narrative, the female character has to be found guilty. *Aitraaz* (2004) a copy of the Hollywood film *Disclosure* comes as a close example of this feeling of guilt.

The woman's guilt will be sealed either by punishment or salvation and the film's story is then resolved through the two traditional endings tailor made for women, she must either i.e., give in, or marry. In this respect one
has to agree to Mulvey's theory that a story demands sadism. In the case of fetishism, Hindi commercial cinema like its western counterpart displaces the lacking of a penis that is a hyper-polished object. Madhubala and Zeenat Aman have been examples of fetishised female stars just varying in their degrees of commodification. Fetishising the woman deflects attention from female 'lack' and changes her from a dangerous figure into a reassuring object of flawless beauty. "Fetishism in cinema confirms the reification of the female figure and thus fails to represent 'woman' outside the phallic norm".27 The notions of the male gaze have become a synoptic term for the analysis of the complex mechanisms in cinema that involve structures like voyeurism, fetishism and narcissism. The concepts aid to understand how our films are generated for male audiences and their hidden desires.

"Men act, women appear. Men look at women; women watch themselves being looked at" (Berger, 1972). In Indian cinema, women have over and over been pushed to a passive position as, "bearer not the maker of meaning", merely an appendage to the man, the wielder of power.28 Bollywood has traditionally showcased men's stories, their struggles, desires, their dreams, conflicts and their heroism but never passed on that power to women.

Women have had an invisible space alongside men always as grieving mothers and wives, lovelorn romantics and as the 'other woman'. Budd Boeticher whom explored the narratives of Hollywood cinema says, "What counts is what the heroine provokes or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love, fear she inspires in the hero or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance."29

In her ground-breaking article De Lauretis states that thinking of gender as sexual difference now keeps feminist theory stuck in a patriarchal dichotomy which therefore gets universalized: woman as the difference from man. This concept prohibits analyzing differences among women, let alone differences within women, says De Lauretis; feminist theory is thus complicit to the sustaining of a binary that is invoked by patriarchal ideology. She gives a critique of feminist theory working with the Marxist notion of power relations, as it relies on a universal and homogeneous oppression of women prior to their entry in the social and historical field. Furthermore, this concept of gender as sexual difference keeps attempts of radical feminist thinking of conceiving the subject in a totally different way, in this case other than the dominant 'masculine' notion of rational and unified subjectivity, at a long distance. De Lauretis thus draws attention to the epistemological framework with which feminist theory was working.
In order to deconstruct this binary of Man (oppressor, subject, at the centre) versus Woman (oppressed, other, marginalized) she uses the theory of representation, or semiotics. Gender, she states, is a representation, and its social construction is this representation of gender. Gender is not (biological) sex, but a system of meanings predicated on the conceptual dichotomy of two biological sexes. Thus gender assigns (constructed and therefore theoretically changeable) identity, status, value and location in family structures to individuals within a certain society. Gender thus has the function of constituting individuals as men and women, she says. She here equates gender with the Althusserian notion of ideology of which he said that it had the function of constituting concrete individuals as subjects. Now, any system of representation or constitutive (like cinema and books, but also for instance everyday family life or feminist theory) that helps the carrology of gender.

The model of power she here uses is derived from the works of Michel Foucault. He found the Marxist idea of power as oppressors versus oppressed, a rather negative view of power, far too simplistic and stated that power should be seen as having a double structure, which he called potestas (the power you are subjected and entitled to; is reactive) and potentia (the potential you have for; is active). He thus sees power as a positive, creative and constituting force and said that it is a process in which we all, although in different ways, are involved and being constituted as subjects. The subject is thus historical and unstable. So when gender is seen as to work through such a model of power you can no longer speak of men as oppressors versus women as oppressed victims.

Teresa de Lauretis examined the structural representations of ‘woman’ (1984, 1987). It was a turning point in the history of the feminist film theory because it not only explored spectatorship in relation to female subjectivity but also with the narrative structure of the film. She sees subjectivity not as a fixed entity but as a constant process of self-production. Narration itself reproduces subjectivity, its structures being defined by Oedipal desire, which should be understood in the realm of the socio-political economy dominated by men and as a way of exploring the sexual origin of subjectivity. Narrative is not just about Oedipal in its content but in its very structure as it throws up the power positions in the society. Women audiences are seduced into femininity with or without their consent therefore coercive seduction is a part of narratives in cinema. In fact de Lauretis turns Mulvey’s statement around; not only does the story demand sadism, sadism too demands a story. She states that films have a universal theme of making their female actors confirm to the ideal image that the man has of them.

As for the female desire, it is inextricably bound up with violence against women and the techniques of cinematic narratives both sustain and
propagate social forms of oppression against women. Although the theorizing of the sexual difference as the difference between men and women and the conceptualization of the position of women as oppressed by male dominance was indeed useful as a start and giving a grip in order to describe and analyse the ways patriarchy functioned; this concept was soon to show its limitations both in the practical as well as in the theoretical field. Why for instance were some women keeping up with patriarchy? Why did consciousness raising not do the job? If femininity was 'lack' and Woman was the oppressed victim, how then women were ever to get out of this purely negative position? As more and more feminists got frustrated, the idea was taken up to conceive of gender not as sexual difference, but as a social construction.

Two classic texts in the 1970's initiated the discussion on the subject of how men and women are presented (and seen) in media and visual imagery. One was John Berger's "Ways of Seeing" (1972) the other Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975). Mulvey's article examines how mainstream Hollywood cinema reinforces male spectatorship and female objectification; woman is viewed as object whilst man is viewing subject. Mulvey's essay provided much, which was relevant to all areas of visual representation but her work, however, had theoretical gaps. Her original theory did not include the possible range of diversity and resistance to the 'male gaze'.

Mulvey analyses cultural texts within a Freudian framework. Freud's work centres "around the presence of absence of the penis, and ...... drives which are related to bodily instincts". He theorized that a woman's lack of a penis evoked the castration threat for a man. Mulvey states that phallocentricism, paradoxically depends on the image of the castrated women to give meaning and order to the world. In the patriarchal unconscious woman symbolizes the castration threat by her lack of a penis. In patriarchal culture therefore woman stands as the signifier of the male other. Mulvey's work was germative in feminist cultural studies. She construed that images are made to be viewed by a specifically gendered audience - the male - what came to be known as the 'male gaze'.

In summary; "In Hollywood cinema, men are invited to identify with a male protagonist in looking at and desiring women as objects, while women are to identify with the female figures passively looked at. Women's own desire and identification with an active figure become effaced". The very much same is true, for our own native film industry.

Jackie Stacey (1995), argues that Mulvey's critical analysis of Hollywood cinematic forms has structured the pleasures, fears and desires around the heterosexual male. For her, Mulvey's thesis produced masculinized
spectators. Stacey asks, what then "is the place of women's desire towards women within this analysis of cinema."32

Mulvey herself later engaged with some of the gaps in 'Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinemas' in 'Afterthoughts' (1981) she argues that women oscillate between masculine and feminine identifications. Her revision is crucial because it shifts the previous fixity of spectator positions and opens up the notions of diversity and resistance. A possible range of diversity and resistance is highlighted in the work of Jackie Stacey and Bell Hooks. Hooks focuses on an oppositional gaze and black female spectators and laments the absence of the male figure as an erotic object. Hooks criticizes feminist film theory's analysis, she regards it as heavily psychoanalytical and ahistoric in orientation. Hooks re-imagines that both film and critical black female spectatorship can "imagine new transgressive possibilities for the formulation of identity".33

Recent Developments in Film Theory: Criticisms and Debates.

Recent developments in film theory and criticism have been devoted to placing attention on the distortion of women's images in film and how films stress the psychological and social significance of the mistreatment of women in past cinema. Research performed in feminist film theory and criticism has consistently demonstrated the psychological significance of the mistreatment of women within cinema. Extensive studies have examined the distortion of women's images to expose the relationship between the cinematic representation of women and how masculine society views women. One specific area of research in the study of film theory and criticism has been analyzing how the media portray women visually and textually to expose a particular ideology of the American culture. In terms of examining the portrayal of women, motion pictures have been one of the most significant forms of media for providing explanations for women's subordination. Movies are one of the clearest and most accessible of looking glasses into the past, being both cultural artifacts and mirrors (Haskell, 1973). As mirrors, motion pictures provide the spectator with visual and textual representations of a culture that merely produced them. DeLauretis (1984) states that "the representation of woman as an image . . . site of visual pleasure, or lure of the gaze is so pervasive in our culture . . . that it necessarily constitutes a starting point for any understanding of sexual difference and its ideological effects in the construction of social subjects."34

Thus, the silver screen has been one of the most significant forms of media for understanding sexual difference in our culture through analyzing narrative events and visual codes in mainstream cinema. Andrew (1984) suggests that the narrative cinema is designed to exploit the characteristics of
our psychic life, most prominently the values of sexual difference that obsess us. He states “all the resources of the cinema function to promote the pleasures associated with such obsessions and the still greater pleasure of our security that these obsessions are natural, that the fictions of cinema mirror the facts of life.”

Narrative structure in cinema has been controlled by the active male hero and the passive female heroine. The woman becomes the object of fetishistic gaze by the masculine audience; as the spectator, who identifies with the male hero, gains control of the female through engaging in fetishistic gaze. The man controls the film fantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the spectator, transferring it behind the screen to neutralise the extradiagnostic tendencies represented by woman as spectacle (Mulvey, 1984). Mulvey states that "here the function of the film is to reproduce as accurately as possible the so-called natural conditions of human perception." 

De Lauretis (1984) explores the link between the relation of masculine viewers to the cinematic and ideological presentation of a woman. She discusses how masculine spectatorship results in the production of masculine desire and pleasure through the manifestation of negative, sexist female images in narrative cinema. In discussing how cinematic and cultural meanings are produced by the negative representation of women on screen, she maintains that classical narrative cinema producers are actively involved in the production of negative female images.

De Lauretis states "the dominant cinema specifies woman in a particular order sets her up in certain positions of meaning, fixes her in a certain identification. Represented as the negative term of sexual differentiation, spectacle-fetish or specular image, in any case ob-scene, woman is constituted as the ground of representation, the looking-glass held up to man". By utilizing Mulvey's ideas, she proposes to deconstruct narrative and masculine viewing pleasure and the production of fetishistic desire through the application of psychoanalysis to resolve issues associated with the narrative process of male identification by analyzing the signification and representation of the female image in the production of narrative and visual codes.

Also taking a psychoanalytic approach to feminist film theory, Doane (1990) discusses how women in cinema are projected as passive objects of male voyeuristic and fetishistic desire through utilizing a variety of cinematic techniques such as framing, lighting, camera movement, and camera angle. Doane notes a definite relationship between the signifier (cinematic
representation of a woman) and the signified (image of a woman) in the production of a spectator's viewing pleasure.

Spectatorial desire is achieved with the camera in establishing the spectator's position in relation to the woman's image on screen. The image orchestrates a gaze, a limit, and its pleasurable transgression (Doane, 1990). Doane states "a 'plastique pertinent to the camera' constitutes the woman not only as the image of desire but as the desirous image--one which the devoted cinephile can cherish and embrace. To 'have' the cinema is, to 'have' the woman". Thus, spectatorial desire is closely associated with distance, proximity, and spatial configuration between the spectator and the image. In narrative cinema, the woman spectator can undertake either of two positions: active or passive. The passive spectator identifies with the female character, while the active spectator identifies with the male hero within a cinematic narrative in order to acquire distance from the fetishistic and voyeuristic image portrayed on screen. This epistemological function of resisting the female image is referred to as the "masquerade" by Doane.

By "masquerading" an image, a female spectator simply recognizes, yet readily denies her sense of self as an object to increase distance between herself and the subordinate image portrayed on screen. Since female spectators view the image portrayed on screen at such close range, it becomes almost impossible for women spectators to fetishize over the image. Doane states "that body which is so close continually reminds her of the castration which cannot be 'fetishized away'".

Gidal (1989) discusses the implications of projecting women as objects of male voyeuristic desire by use of various cinematic techniques such as camera angle and framing in mainstream narrative film. Gidal discusses the need to deconstruct cinema by bringing attention to the distortion of women's images resulting from voyeuristic masculine spectatorial desire achieved through the cinematic viewing process. According to Gidal, "it is the denial of apartness that motivates voyeurism, the illusion of partaking, and for this illusion to function, identification with the other must take place. Whether it has to do with sympathetic feelings or sadistic ones is structurally immaterial. It is in the face of powerlessness to be other than the eluctable, isolate self that identifications of voyeurism originate".

By isolating the viewer from the passive object of viewing in narrative cinema, this becomes a useful method of textual analysis in determining how the masculine unconscious viewing process can result in leaving a women subject of viewing, whether the passive object of male voyeuristic desire or the female spectator, feeling victimized. Gidal concludes that "the relations of voyeurism, rape, empirical statistics, bourgeois concepts of freedom of
expression for maintaining male power, all coalesce here as questions problematized around the viewer-as-subject through the cinematic."^{41}

Haskell (1973) discusses how the manners in which male directors portray women in film provide the spectator with insight into their thoughts, fantasies, and values. Whether in the European or the American film, whether seen as a sociological artifact or artistic creation, women, by the logistics of film production and the laws of Western society, generally emerge as the projections of male values (Haskell, 1973). Haskell claims, "Whether as the product-of one auteur or of the system . . . women are the vehicle of men's fantasies, the 'anima' of the collective male unconscious, and the scapegoat of men's fears Haskell identifies a vast majority of images of women found in film and attempts to account for reasons why each type of woman exists in"^{42} narrative cinema. Haskell discusses various fictitious types of women created by male directors in order to capitalize in fetishistic gain by fulfilling the fantasies of her director. Some of these types of women Haskell chooses to identify include: the "vamp," "murderous seductress," "sex goddess," "flapper," "whore," and "virgin."

Haskell believes that these portrayals of women in mainstream narrative cinema are reflections of an individual male director's interest in her as a sexual object or illustrations of his inner turmoil. By examining the themes and representations of women in the films of a certain director, it is possible; Haskell claims, to determine if a director's personal relationship with women affects the portrayals of women reflected in film. We can only speculate, as we reexamine the themes of certain directors, what kind of love this was: whether it liberated, imprisoned, or did both; whether a director allowed the women he loved to shape his vision of women, or whether, conversely, he imposed his views, as preconceptions, on the woman he directed (Haskell, 1973).

Kuhn (1982) discusses how the application of psychoanalytic and semiotic thought applied to feminist film theory provides spectators with a method with which to become sensitive to what often remains unseen by the spectator within dominant narrative cinema. Kuhn suggests that when adopting a psychoanalytical and semiotic approach to film theory, the spectator should focus attention to the presence as well as the absence of women's experience in films.

In order to draw attention to the presence of women's repression and the absence of women's experience in film, Kuhn suggests that the spectator should read the film to expose any absence of women's experience in the text, examine the framework in which women's images are represented in the film's narrative/non-narrative sequence; as well as examine any possible
relationships between the film production and the formation of meaning in the narrative/non-narrative structures and elements of mise-en-scene existing in the film. Kuhn states, "feminist film theory may therefore operate at the levels of both text and context, and would ideally aim to delineate the relationship between the two".43

Commenting on Haskell's work, Kuhn (1982) argues that "the frame of reference for all this work is defined by a shared and usually implicit assumption concerning the relationship between cinematic representation and the real world': that a film, in recording or reflecting the world in a directed or mediated fashion, is in some sense a vehicle for transmitting meanings which originate outside of itself--within the intentions of filmmakers, perhaps or within social structures".44

Bergstrom (1988) discusses the literary works of Raymond Bellour in exploring various methods of textual analysis, which have been significant to the study of feminist film theory. In analyzing the importance of the work of Bellour, Bergstrom explores how the organization of narrative events within classic narrative film aid in the formation of codes, which reveal repetitions within the plot..45

These codes, and their relationship to one another, as suggested by Bergstrom, are a useful method of textual analysis in revealing the representation of sexual difference in narrative film to the female spectator. According to Bergstrom, "At this present stage of Bellour's work, he has brought together identification, vision, and pleasure (fascination) in a way that suggests direct connections with the most important work being done in the area of film and psychoanalytical theory by feminists".46 Bergstrom illustrates the importance of having the spectator engage in a highly complex reading of classic narrative cinema to reveal the significance of elements of sexual difference evident in mainstream film.

Bergstrom proposes that "these studies have been important . . . as they investigate how meaning is produced in the classical film, and as they have helped to clarify and specify the systematic mapping of sexual difference-and therefore of the woman's function--onto the logic of narrative events, symbolization and figuration, and as they have attempted to understand the symbolic weight of the production of these figures".47

Photographic/cinematic images of women have been so consistently oppressive and manipulative, that the very idea of a feminist filmmaking practice seems a dashed hope. "The simple gesture of directing a camera toward a woman", Mary Anne recapitulates in her thoughts about filming the female body, "has become equivalent to a terrorist act."48 The cinema is
generating and guaranteeing pleasure by corroboration of the spectator's identity. Because this identity is bound up with that of the voyeur and the fetishist, because it requires for its support the potential (phallus) for illusionary 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." The following voyage through the history of feminist theory and analyses of motion pictures - is designed to sketch some of its basic conceptions and central reasoning.

No allègresse at the point of our departure, Laura's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, Michelle Citron, Julia Lesage, Judith Mayne, B. Ruby Rich, and Anna Maria Taylor's, Women and Film: A Discussion of Feminist Aesthetics, 1978 is a kind of founding document and the single most reprinted essay in the field of feminist film theory. According to Laura's psychoanalytical approach, Hollywood cinema is integrally bound up with erotic ways of looking and audience identification: Women are inevitably made into passive objects of male voyeuristic, sadistic, and fetishistic drives; they appear simply to fulfill the desires and express the anxieties of the men both on screen and in the audience; and women filmgoers, by implication, can only have a masochistic relation to this cinema.

This is a conclusion, not very satisfactory for a group of feminist filmmakers and film critics, B. Ruby Rich's, In the Name of Feminist Film Criticism 1985 theorizes about the bisexuality of the female spectator. More attention, they say, needs to be paid to women's erotic attraction to other women: Madhuri Dixit, for instance, cannot be read only as a fetishized object of male desire, but also as a female 'subcultural icon', a with a lesbian underground reputation. And B. Ruby insists that there have to be other options for the female spectator "than to identify either with a female star or with the man behind me hitting the back of my seat with his knees." Mary Anne, taking into account also Laura's "Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema": Inspired by Duel in the Sun (1979), shifts her interest away from the male spectator and traces the opaque question of the female audience. Teresa De Lauretis “Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics and Cinema", (1984) notes " female spectatorship is indeed problematic, since the woman is the object - her options oscillating between masochistically over identifying with female images on the screen or narcissistically becoming her own image of desire." She aligns this contradictory nature of female spectatorship to the woman's alleged inability to achieve a distance from the textual body, which is related to her inability to separate decisively from the maternal body. Because women lack a penis, they lack the possibility of symbolizing their difference from their mother. The proximity to the (maternal) body leads her to "over identify with the image": "This closeness to the body, this excess, prevents the
woman from assuming a position similar to the man's in relation to signifying systems. For she is haunted by the loss of a loss, 'the lack of that lack' so essential for the realization of the ideals of semiotic systems."

Subsequently, Teresa refers to these conceptions in order to develop a theory of the female spectator: Identification on part of women in the cinema, she argues, is a lot more complex than feminist theory has been thinking: far from being simply masochistic, the female spectator is always caught up in a double desire, identifying at one and the same time not only with the passive (female) object, but with the active (usually male) subject; a desire which is both passive and active, homosexual and heterosexual. A similar point is made by E. Ann, who, drawing on the neo-Freudian work of Julia Kristeva, correlates patriarchy's repression of the non symbolic (pre oedipal) aspects of motherhood to the "homosexual components" involved in the mother/daughter relationship. Man, accordingly, fearing that women's bisexuality could make them competitors for the male preserve, therefore has to keep sublimating non symbolic elements.

Feminist film theory and criticism has contributed enormously to our understanding on sexual difference and gender identity. Writers and thinkers working in this area over time have developed new critical methodologies and theories, producing new knowledges concerned with deconstructing representation and offering new statements within which, and by which, the woman, either as subject or object, can be known. Authors challenged orthodox theories and film histories, to rethink representational categories as well as reclaim the contribution made by women to the history of cinema and filmmaking practice. In recent years, feminist film research extended its cultural interests and influence.

One cannot overlook the critical work of the first feminist scholars as a starting point. Conceived in the politically radical context of the women's liberation movement, and at an historical moment when women in Western Europe and America lobbied for improved political representation and sexual equality, the emergence of feminist film theory and criticism drew strength from this liberal, left wing political struggle.

A lot of film literature written in this period charts the development of feminist film theory and the theorising of cinema in relation to the issues raised by feminist inquiry from the early 1970s to the present. The broad range of knowledges produced by film feminism is quite extraordinary, dependent upon different aims, objectives and intellectual interests. This section aims to document this dynamic critical field of feminist film studies – to chart the numerous feminist interventions and to critically think about how
the socio-historical, political and cultural contexts shaped what was said and how it was said.

Postmodernity, globalisation and transnationalism, digital technologies and new medias continue to pose fresh questions for film feminism and raise new methodological challenges for the discipline. One can take the critical work of the first feminist scholars as a starting point. Conceived in the politically radical context of the women's liberation movement, and at an historical moment when women in Western Europe and America lobbied for improved political representation and sexual equality, the emergence of feminist film theory and criticism drew strength from this liberal, left wing political struggle. The socio-cultural construct of femininity, long discussed by women thinkers dating back to Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97), was identified as the primary source of female political oppression, economic subordination and historical invisibility.

Second-wave feminism, defined by Annette Kuhn, is broadly ‘a set of political practices founded in analyses of the social/historical position of women as subordinated, oppressed or exploited either within dominant modes of production [such as capitalism] and/or by the social relations of patriarchy or male domination’.53 Raising awareness about how patriarchal ideology excluded, silenced and oppressed women would indelibly mark this political movement.

Early feminist initiatives into film theory in the 1970s were framed by two other feminist interventions: the history of second-wave feminism and theoretical accounts that deal with images of women created and circulated within our dominant culture defined by patriarchy and heterosexuality. It is to these antecedents – what Laura Mulvey called the ‘wider explosive meeting between feminism and patriarchal culture,’ 54 – that one can turn to first in order to contextualise the earliest feminist writings on film. It was Simone de Beauvoir’s; “The Second Sex” is what laid the foundation for the political and theoretical work undertaken in the early 1970s of why Woman is defined as ‘Other’.

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as an Other.55 De Beauvoir’s treaty on the myth of woman as Other is grounded in the existentialist ethics set out by Jean-Paul Sartre, in which he argued that
human freedom is achieved through a constant state of action (or, transcendence). Existentialist theory suggests that there is no divine justification for existence other than the need to self-justify one's own being. The subject, existing in a perpetual state of self-awareness and self-analysis, achieves transcendence by actively shifting away from a state of passivity and stagnation (or, immanence). Reframing these ideas, de Beauvoir genderises transcendence and immanence, to suggest that the Self can only be determined with reference to what it is not. Man therefore proceeds to confirm the woman as Other in the process of identifying himself as Subject.

She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute she is the Other. Woman verifies male transcendence; she is the object against which the male must differentiate himself to attain subjectivity. Finding no compelling reason in the fields of natural science or psychoanalysis for explaining why the woman should be biologically inferior suggested to de Beauvoir that patriarchal culture is somehow responsible for generating and circulating self-confirming parameters that institute gender hierarchies and sexual inequalities. The female emerges as condemned to her subordinate role, 'defined exclusively in her relation to man.'

For this reason, cultural constructions of woman possess no stable meaning, argues de Beauvoir: 'she is a false Infinite, an Ideal without truth.' Patriarchal knowledge instead relentlessly constructs an idea of woman as a projection of male fantasies and anxieties, of phallocentric Otherness and masculine lack. What is more, these ideals translate into virile myths of the unattainable ('she is all that man desires and all that he does not attain'), of ideal beauty and perfection, of Death and abjection ('the hero lost for ever as he falls back) into the maternal shadows – cave, abyss, hell. She is an idol, a servant, the source of life, a power of darkness; she is the elemental silence of truth, she is artifice, gossip and falsehood; she is healing presence and sorceress; she is man's prey, his downfall, she is everything that he is not and that he longs for, his negation and his raison d'être.

The eternal feminine myth emerges as nothing more than a patriarchal construction, representing both everything and nothing, ideal and monstrous. No gendered body exists that has not already been inscribed with, and interpreted by, cultural meanings, argues de Beauvoir. Social myths are transmitted through culture – 'religions, traditions, language, tales, songs, movies,' – which in turn constructs how the individual comes to know, perceive and experience the material world. Yet, 'representation of the world ...
is the work of men' which depicts it 'from their own point of view' and is confused 'with absolute truth'.63 Such is the vigour of the patriarchal discourse that myths, theories, opinions, philosophies generated over centuries regarding gender hierarchies and sexual inequalities assume the status of received wisdom: 'proving woman's inferiority [draws] not only upon religion, philosophy and theology ... but also upon science – biology, experimental psychology'.64; and it is through these discourses, contends de Beauvoir, that women learn to be object rather than subject: 'the "true woman" is required to make herself object, to be the Other'.65

These pioneering studies underpinned the radical political action of the feminist movement, offering knowledge about how the patriarchal world worked to oppress women. Drawing directly on de Beauvoir's work allowed second-wave feminist writers to propose uncompromising cultural histories of female oppression, sexual inequality and gender exclusion: 'culture is so saturated with male bias that women almost never have a chance to see themselves culturally through their own eyes.' 66 These writings not only proved useful for deconstructing patriarchal ideology in which the supremacy and importance of male subjectivity had gone unquestioned, but also identified new spaces for female resistance and the articulation of an alternative, subjective feminine experience. As an identifiable area by the 1970s, feminist theory gave voice to a female political consciousness in which the 'personal is political'.

Molly Haskell and Marjorie Rosen's historical studies on the treatment of women in the movies are generally considered good examples of what is commonly referred to as 'reflection theory'. Both accounts propose uncompromising feminist critiques of how Hollywood cinema has over time repressed women through categorising female types in film: the glamour goddess, the femme fatale, the self-sacrificing mother. Another sociological approach came from Joan Mellen (1974) with her account of the sexist structures at work in European cinema. Grounding each contribution is the underlying assumption that films somehow hold up a reflective mirror to society; as Haskell declares in her introduction: 'Movies are one of the clearest and most accessible of looking glasses into the past, being both cultural artifacts and mirrors.' 67 Rosen's cultural history chronicling the changing image of the ideal Hollywood woman owes as much to de Beauvoir's formulation of the eternal feminine myth as it does to Friedan's thinking on socio-cultural constructions of women in. The Feminine Mystique Popcorn Venus (1973), Rosen traces how Hollywood shaped its female stars and assembled its film narratives against the backdrop of seismic social and
economic changes taking place in twentieth-century America, as ‘the industry held a warped mirror up to life’.68

Hollywood is understood by Rosen as an institution geared toward the production of patriarchal ideology and a powerful carrier of its values and ideas. Drawing explicitly on de Beauvoir’s ideas of how patriarchal cultural myths govern human perception allows Rosen to identify how film versions of femininity speak of male cultural dominance, images which in turn are offered to real women to identify with and/or adopt. These stereotypical images afford female audiences little chance for authentic recognition. Instead they produce a false consciousness for women, offering them nothing but an escape into fantasy through identification with stereotypical images: ‘How profoundly Hollywood’s values have influenced a gullible public – like myself. But why did the public – and especially its females – so passively embrace the industry’s interpretation of life?’69 Despite generating new representations that coincided with real advancements made by women, the industry’s continual depiction of women as sex objects or victims suggests to Rosen that these images spoke of patriarchal anxieties regarding the loss of male socio-economic and sexual power.

Nowhere is the site of struggle over social change and cultural representation so evident as in the figure of female stars.70 Aligned with the character she plays, the star embodies patriarchal fantasies while eliminating male fears, ‘celluloid aphrodisiacs – talking, walking and comforting a patriarchal society’.71 Yet, in being forced to live out on-screen fantasies off-screen, the women behind the icon contest and subvert what their image exemplifies to reveal contradiction. Defining the star as reflecting and misrepresenting the real leads Rosen to make an important link between text and context, in which the female star emerges as a site of contestation.

Haskell’s From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in Films (1974) is an equally uncompromising view of American cinema and its depiction of women. She narrativises the decade-by-decade shift in female representation as an arc from ‘reverence’ (the silent era) to ‘rape’ (Hollywood in the 1960s and 1970s): ‘As the propaganda arm of the American Dream machine’, and paralleling the real socio-political changes for women, the American film industry ‘maneuvered to keep women in their place’.72 Hollywood produced female ‘myths of subjection and sacrifice’. 73 From the ‘Victorian virgins’ of the 1910s and 1920s to the deified sex goddesses and ‘sultry (and diabolical) femmes fatales of traditional male fantasy,’74 veneration increasingly turns to sexual violence and misogyny during the liberated 1960s. The reason for this reactive response is clear argues Haskell: The
growing strength and demands of women in real life, spearheaded by women’s liberation, obviously provoked a backlash in commercial film.\textsuperscript{75}

Haskell’s argument proves more complex than the trajectory of her reverence to rape thesis initially suggests. She begins by echoing de Beauvoir’s thinking on how Western culture embeds women’s inferiority into its social fabric: The big lie perpetrated in Western society is the idea of women’s inferiority, a lie so deeply ingrained in our social behaviour that merely to recognise it is to risk unravelling the entire fabric of civilisation.\textsuperscript{76} Hollywood, as ‘an industry dedicated for the most part of reinforcing the lie’,\textsuperscript{77} generates and continues to perpetuate ideas of how the woman is perceived by society. And this goes for our industry also. Suggesting that cinema has historically functioned to mask female achievement and promote the male point of view prompts her to concentrate on the ways in which Hollywood movies simultaneously reproduce social realities while distorting women’s experience of those realities. Yet film, she argues, represents neither a conscious conspiracy nor a particular ideological stance. Unconscious drives and cultural repression, working at a much deeper level, instead determine how women are represented on screen. Contradiction and social taboo further condition these images of an ideologically laden femininity. Her quasi-sociological approach tentatively suggests how film meaning is made by the obsessions, both conscious and unconscious, of its director as well as by other dissident opinions.

What Haskell suggests here is that a few female stars bring something else to the role while contesting the feminine stereotype she portrays in the process. Haskell and Rosen contributed a great deal to initial feminist understanding of how representation is intricately linked to patriarchal myths, values and opinions: ‘Woman’s image of herself is so entwined in the tangle of myths and inventions made by man that it is hard to look at it straight.’\textsuperscript{78} But their claim that cinema reduces images of women to a limited range of female stereotypes as a ‘vehicle of male fantasies’ and ‘the scapegoat of men’s fears,’ \textsuperscript{79} is never proved beyond listing historical examples and sweeping claims.

These writers, while recognising the ability of the film image to naturalise what is only a projection of patriarchal ideology, were seen by other feminists as failing to provide adequate theoretical frameworks for deconstructing the complexity of what they were saying. Their theoretical assumption, founded upon the second-wave feminist presupposition of a direct relation between representation and social values fixed by ideology, could not in the opinion of Claire Johnston, Pam Cook and others – sufficiently account for how ideology functions to produce meaning within the
film text. Images do not simply reflect the social world but are ideological signifiers.

Feminists from cultural studies would in turn point to the limits of the semiotic-psychoanalytic theoretical project. Theirs instead was a debate about text and context anticipated earlier by Haskell in her useful - if uneasy - intervention related to representation and its reception. This argument is most fully developed in her chapter on the 'woman's film' of the 1930s and 1940s: Because the woman's film was designed for and tailored to a certain market, its recurrent themes represent the closest thing to an expression of the collective drives, conscious and unconscious, of American women, of their avowed obligations and their unconscious resistance. Having identified a link, Haskell assigns fixed meanings and reading positions, as if all female audiences use and understand the film text in exactly the same way. Nowhere does she address this issue in relation to how the institutional context influenced film form or its reception. Film scholars also investigated the cultural studies intervention that identified the disregard for the socio-cultural context in which female spectators watched film. It turned away from the theoretical models defined by semiotics and psychoanalysis, denouncing them as essentialist, leaving little space for 'textual negotiation' (Gledhill 1988).

Combining textual analyses with studies of audience reception and/or the economies of film culture, writers such as Christine Gledhill and Annette Kuhn identified a more complex and nuanced relationship between text, spectator and the institution of cinema. The cultural studies approach to film and the institution of cinema became less informed by an exclusive focus on the text than by ethnographic studies (Jackie Stacey and Jacqueline Bobo) or by a more interdisciplinary approach to contemporary culture (Tania Modleski and E. Ann Kaplan). Another criticism of orthodox feminist film theory came from Black feminism regarding the failure to address race and ethnicity. What this revision proposed was that the Black woman functioned as the objectified Other within (white) feminist film theory. Jane Gaines in particular pointed to the elision of race in psychoanalytic models of sexual difference.

Haskell's acknowledgement of unconscious drives anticipates later arguments by feminist theorists in the 1980s and 1990s about the role of fantasy and desire in the construction of visual pleasures as well as female subjectivity. Moving beyond the idea that male fantasy defines meaning, Haskell cautions the feminist critic from ignoring the fact that women's own 'rearguard fantasies of rape, sadism, submission, liberation and anonymous sex are as important a key to our emancipation, our self-understanding'. These interventions speak about subjectivity, sexual difference and fantasy...
differently. In particular, it focuses on two phases: the 1980s and the revision of psychoanalytic theory; and the 1990s with the intervention from queer theory and lesbian/gay studies. Scholars rethought the limits of existing theories to develop ever more sophisticated readings of subjectivity, sexual difference and fantasy. In much the same way as feminist film theory sought to deconstruct the workings of a film text from various perspectives by, in the words of Annette Kuhn, ‘making visible the invisible.’ In as much as feminist film theory aims to expose the ideological operations of patriarchy at work within textual and institutional practices, the field of feminist film studies is self-aware about the difficulties involved in articulating those arguments. Processes involved in discrediting, separating from, and even reclaiming and revising, past feminist debates reveal the perils involved in writing a feminist film theory. Another thread that this work intends is to pull out is how film feminism functions as a set of conceptual tools to articulate what can and cannot be said within dominant ideology. Speaking about such matters is to engage directly with structures of power and knowledge. Adapting a concept introduced by Tania Modleski, it is held that film feminism operates as a ‘space of deferral’.

By this is meant that feminist film theory operates to open up a critical space that allows women to enter into dialogue with each other and beyond the discipline. Not only does this talk seek to make sense of representation, subjectivity and experience but also confers new revelatory truths about these issues. Taking the discourse as a whole makes known the trials and tribulations involved in the process of writing theory. For it reveals the ambiguities involved when women speak within patriarchy as well as how film feminism as a field of knowledge gives representation for better or worse to the paradox.

Beginning from the 1970’s a large amount of theoretical writings appeared on the academic scene-some of which with their psychoanalytical component belong to what is called ‘post-structuralism’. The relationship between film theory and revolution has been for real. But in restrospect it appears that what actually propelled the theoretical activity was, more than the revolutionary spirit, the writer’s love for the cinema, ‘cinephilia’.

Film theory replaced the earlier interest in film technique and became a more subtle, more refined, fetish. One way to possess the cinema is to theorize it, as Christian Metz saw so clearly and expressed somewhat belatedly. He wrote:

_to be a theoretician of the cinema, one should ideally no longer love the cinema and yet still love it: have loved it a lot and just have detached oneself_
from it by taking it up again from the other end, taking it as a target for the very same scopic drive (scopophilia) which had made one love it. Have broken with it, as certain relationships are broken not in order to move on to something else, but in order to return to it at the next bend of the spiral. Carry the institution inside one still so that it is in a place accessible to self-analysis, but carry it there as a distinct instance which does not over-infiltrate the rest of the ego with the thousand paralyzing bonds of a tender unconditionality. (The Imaginary Signifier, 1975).

What Metz was trying to explain with such emphasis and in such a circuitous manner was that to be a film theoretician one would need a profound experience of the cinema. But at the same time there must be break from that empirical knowledge if there is to be an 'advance of knowledge'. The 'hoped-for advance of knowledge' cannot be a continuation of the empirical knowledge of the cinema. There should be thus an epistemological break. This necessity was emphasized by all materialist thinkers. In other words, a discourse cannot be explained at the level at which it occurs. Though logicians like Bertrand Russell argued that Metz's theory lacked logic, his writings however seek to be, if not scientific, at least scientific-in-content.

In short film theorists have argued that film theory has to be defined within the larger context of film studies and semiotics. One has to remember that the film theoretician has a special relation with film signs and that is the reason why film theory has got to be part of the larger theorizing activity of semiotics. Understanding cinema helps us to in understanding the whole universe of signs, of who make signs or who produces meanings from signs: from knowledge of the cinema to knowledge of the self in a signifying society.

After examining the sources-external as well as internal and also as the purpose of film theorizing, one can now look into the defining activity of theory itself. First of all there has been a shift in emphasis from films in general to particular types of films. Jean Mitry, for instance, who produced the monumental Esthetique et psychologie du cinema, wanted 'not to formulate a critique of films, but to envisage conditions of cinema and the formal potential of it's means of expression'; or again, to 'discover in art works the practical as well as necessary conditions that make them what they are.' An opposite approach is to consider what Roland Barthes would say- as the theory itself. And this is what Dudley Andrew followed. In Concepts in Film Theory (1984) he proclaimed:

The era of pure theory is over and.... The task before us consists in confronting film concepts not with logic or with paradigms derived from other fields, but with exemplary films and sequences of films.
Almost at the same time around, Richard Roud (1980) wrote, that the most rewarding way to study cinema is by considering films and filmmakers rather than the evolution of the medium. Thus these two prolific film scholars marked the shift in concern over cinema to films.

Film theorizing would also push us to discuss the various types of discourses of film. Most discourses on film are part of the film phenomenon, a reverberation of the film experience itself. This is obvious as regards all forms of film advertisement on films, which entice the eventual cinemagoer. But film reviews play the same role, even if in a slightly more sophisticated manner. Film reviews are the appetizers that prepare the cine audience: when they are read after viewing a film, they are the liqueurs that help absorbing the film. The difference may not be very great between a piece of film criticism and a review, although the former usually requires more competence to write. Yet, from the spectator's point of view, the two forms of writing aim to fulfill similar functions. Film analysis, for all its technical jargon, is often little more than a longer film review. The review states facts and judgments about the film; the critique and analysis give reasons for the judgments and explain the facts. All these discourses-review, critique, analysis- are uttered, as it were, from within the film experience and, as such, they are parts of the film phenomenon. They ultimately serve in helping the audience undergo the experience; they do not enlighten the audience on that experience.

Feminist film theory over the past two decades has focused on the visual representation of women as spectacle. Kaja Silverman (1980) argued that it is the notion about classical cinema as a whole being constructed visually and acoustically to shore up a male subjectivity, with the man not only in control of the gaze but also of the authorial voice. Sound in cinema is paradoxically used to 'silence' women, say feminist film scholars, which is made possible by certain underlying premises: the myth of woman's 'naturally' less powerful voice, and 'a cultural distaste' for women's voices. The motor of feminist film theory however, as Teresa asserted in 1985, is no longer only one of "disrupting man-centered vision by representing its blind spots, its gaps or its repressed," but also "one of attending to the creation of another - feminine or feminist - vision".

The Project of Feminine Visions

A nostalgic return to the unwritten body is not conceivable. Before moving on to the project of feminine vision, filmmaker Peter Gidal, who, in attempting to articulate the relationship between his own filmmaking practice and feminist concerns, draws a (logical?) conclusion: "In terms of the feminist struggle specifically, I have had a vehement refusal over the last decade ... to allow images of women into my films at all, since I do not see how those
images can be separated from the dominant meanings." This is what Bombay cinema need to inculcate and envisage pertaining to the portrayal of women on the screens. This, however, as Mary Anne puts it, is the extreme formulation of a project which can define itself only in terms of negativity. And the feminine community, developing its own visions, is certainly not enthusiastic about it or even willing to collaborate in patriarchy's plot of rendering women invisible.

Early feminist filmmaking addressed subjects such as violence against women, day care, laboring, payment, sexual harassment, and aging. Other films honored the involvement of women in historical events or featured personality portrayals dedicated to outstanding individuals. They were movies like *Rosie the Riveter* or *Union Maids*, shot with docufictional techniques in cinéma vérité style, with distinct elements of collectivism, allowing the interviewed subjects to participate in the film production process and transcending the political motifs and aims of the filmmakers. Already in 1972, Johnston had called not only for a cinema originating from women which would produce new images, but for a cinema different in form and content: "In rejecting a sociological analysis of women in the cinema we reject any view in terms of realism, for this would involve a denial of the reality of the myth of operation." What Claire demands is a deconstructive cinema, a 'counter-cinema', rejecting illusionistic realism by rupturing narrative flow and interrogating the process of filmmaking.

Thus, contemporary filmmaking addresses itself to the activity of uncoding, de-coding, deconstructing the given images, a process of defamiliarization, whose aim is not so much that of seeing the female body differently, but of exposing the habitual meanings and values attached to femininity as cultural constructions. Here only a few examples may suffice: In *The Camera: Je / La Caméra: Eye*, Babette (Mangolte) explores the relations of power sustained within the camera-subject nexus. The discomfort of the subjects posing for the camera, together with the authority of the off-screen voice giving instructions ("smile", 'look to the left') challenge the photographic image's claim to naturalism and spontaneity. And, most interestingly, the protagonists, whether male or female, inevitably appear to assume a mask of 'femininity' in order to became photographic - as though femininity were synonymous with the *pose*.

What is at work behind these idealized images of women? How can we understand their appeal to an audience of both men and women? If we were to review some theoretical models that might help us explain both how these images might have been "consumed" by their viewers, and the "cultural work" these images might also have performed.
Psychoanalytic theorists, following in the footsteps of Freud and Lacan, have established that humans experience "pleasure" in the act of looking, particularly in looking at images of the human form. However, theorists diverge on exactly how this "pleasure in looking" varies across the axis of sex and gender, particularly in relation to the medium of film. Laura Mulvey's 1975 groundbreaking essay on the "male gaze" spawned a generation of theoretical work on the pleasures of "the gaze," including work that complicates Mulvey's model by introducing issues of sexual orientation and race as well. Nevertheless, as Gillian Rose points out in *Visual Methodologies* (2001), her analysis of theories and methods for examining the visual, psychoanalysis - as a methodology - still falls short in assuming an "ideal" viewing subject (whether "male/female," "white/black" or "straight/lesbian/queer"). In general, what this model has lacked is attention to the specific historically-determined social practices that often determine viewing practices. Accordingly, some psychoanalysts have turned to other theoretical models to locate viewing practices within their particular historical moments.

Much of this discussion of socially-determined viewing practices can be traced to the work of Michel Foucault and "discourse theory." Psychoanalytic theorist Kaja Silverman traces one such shift in "nineteenth-century discourses, from painting and the novel to psychoanalysis and photography" by examining the work of J.C. Flugel on men's fashion. According to Flugel, beginning around 1750, in what Flugel calls "the Great Masculine Renunciation," men began to give up bright colors and "male finery" in fashion and self-presentation. Silverman argues that this "despecularization of the male subject" led to the subsequent "hyperspecularization of the female subject." This "hyperspecularization" certainly seems to be at work in these idealized images of women in the films analysed.

Semiotics is another theoretical model that is useful for "decoding" these visual images. In a series of lectures *Course on General Linguistics*, Ferdinand de Saussure, considered one of the "fathers" of semiotics, argued that language is a "sign system" composed of a "signified" (a concept), a "signifier," (the sound attached to that concept) and "referent" (the object in the real world to which the signifier and signified point). Roland Barthes applied Saussure's sign system to a study of photographs and other cultural "signs." Barthes' essays, originally published in French magazines between 1954 and 1956, and collected in *Mythologies*, treated photographs and other "sign" systems operating in French culture. In this respect Barthes' work parallels that of Erwin Panofsky in art history, who argues that painting, and other forms of art, can best be interpreted by reference to their "iconography," or system of symbols and signs. Stuart Hall extended semiotic theory to
other cultural forms, particularly television, by distinguishing between a society's "dominant codes" (those generally imposed by those in social, cultural, and political control of a society), "negotiated codes," (those that acknowledge dominant interpretations, but in some way challenge these codes) and "oppositional codes" (those interpretations that operate in resistance to the dominant codes). Whether we use the terms "signifier/signified," "iconographic symbols," or "codes," what we refer to in these images is the relationship between specific details and how these details would be "read" or "understood" by their reader/viewers.

Another type of discourse, theory, however, seeks to enlighten the audience on their experience. The root meaning of the word 'theory' is to look at. A theory is a look at something. By looking one establishes and maintains a distance between oneself and that which one looks at. Hence a film theory is a discourse parallel to the film discourse. It can aid in gaining knowledge of and about films. This knowledge, is however, indirectly related to filmmaking. Like Eisenstein said, 'when I create, I do not explain.'

Parallel to the film discourse, the film theory discourse creates a context-or to use Julia Kristeva's word- an 'intertext' which makes it possible to enunciate not only a possible meaning of the film but also its eventual significance to particular viewers. In this way film theory breaks off from the film under study but relinks it 'from the other side.'

It was again Kaja Silvermann (1988) who drew on Lacanian psychoanalysis and postulates that each subject is structured by lack or symbolic castration. In our societies however, the female subject is made to bear the burden of that lack to provide the male subject with the illusion of wholeness and unity. She asserts that in cinema this displacement is enacted not only through the gazer and the image but also through its auditory register. 'Contrary to the mere frequent disembodiment of the male voice in cinema, the female voice is restricted to the realm of the body' (Smelik, 1998). This keeps the female outside its discourse. The female voice never reaches a significant position in language, meaning or power and is thereby relegated to mere screams, babble or silence in dominant cinema worldwide.

This theoretical basis helps to understand the large domain of commercial Hindi films in order to unearth the hidden secrets of our socialisation with the help of psychological, sociological tools.

It can be said with no exaggeration that without women there would be no cinema. Sadly, this is so not because the natural concerns of genuine womanhood have been addressed in film, but because from the very
beginnings of cinema a woman has been made the centerpiece of attraction, an object of desire. This systematic cultivation of women as objects of desire has been akin to the gradual process of drug addiction: at first, the effects were rather mild and pleasantly stimulating - and thus considered not only harmless by both men and women, but even liberating - however, as time went on and doses increased, a feverish state of dependency set in. What has started out as a quest for liberation from convention, ended up being a different form of enslavement. Today women can be seen to have divided themselves into roughly two groups: those, who continue to perceive this enslavement as "liberation"; and those, who vaguely sense that the real search for the true liberation of women has not even begun.

Cinema, in particular, has made a devastating contribution here. One definition of 99% of cinema would be to say that it specializes in creating beauty-substitutes. Through personality cults of stars, through promotion of escapism into fantasy, it creates images, which encourage superficiality and vanity - the two qualities that are already sufficiently developed as it is within all of us. And since women, due to their superior intuitive faculty, are more susceptible to suggestions through imagery than men, the effect on the female population has been nothing short of catastrophic.

One can thus chart the development of feminist film theory and the theorising of cinema in relation to the issues raised by feminist inquiry from the early 1970s to the present. The broad range of knowledges produced by film feminism is quite extraordinary, dependent upon different aims, objectives and intellectual interests. This section aims to document this dynamic critical field of feminist film studies – to chart the numerous feminist interventions and to critically think about how the socio-historical, political and cultural contexts shaped what was said and how it was said.

The body of work called feminist film theory and criticism has played a crucial – and often controversial – role in the emergence of film studies as an academic discipline; in turn, film studies shaped feminist concerns as well as granted feminist research a space to flourish. Demonstrating an awareness of the origins and influences that shape feminist film theory may help us rethink our ideas about how a field of knowledge is determined. In knowing how film feminism formed, we may also learn what it wants us to know and how individual theoretical texts fit into a larger field of study. Feminist film theory is a very particular type of theory, conceived from disciplines beyond its borders such as (post) structuralism, psychoanalysis, post-colonialism and queer theory as well as generated from inside film studies. Studying the field of knowledge known as feminist film studies allows us to read it as a set of
statements about the institution of cinema and cultural production, about representational categories and gendered subjectivity, about identification and spectatorship practices, about cultural authority and historical (in)visibility, about desire and fantasy, and about the interaction between these areas.

Though there is hardly a space for female desire on Bollywood’s shelves, western feminism helps to understand the involvement of feminine identification with the images on the screen. They repeatedly stress on the double ‘identification theory’ where the female audiences take up both active and passive positions of desire. For Indian audiences female pleasurability is an alien or perhaps a sacrilegious concept, therefore it never appears in the narratives of popular Hindi cinema. ‘Desire for the other and desire to be desired by the other’ translates into the desire to be the other (Woman) and thus seduces them into felinity. The notion of the female then seems to be a contradiction in terms so much so that De Lauretis sometime refers to the female subject as ‘non-subject.’ ‘Woman’ is fundamentally unrepresentable as subject of desire; she can only be represented as a representation. Feminist theory in a way is paradoxical because it showcases the unrepresentability of women as subject of desire and also historical women who know themselves to be as subjects. The problem of the audience has long troubled both histories and theories of film. The films themselves still present solid textual evidence, as do the technologies used to both make and exhibit them. Less palpable, though, is the audience, which is aggravating because it is the audience, it may be argued, which constitutes the cinema’s raison d’etre.
Notes and References.

1 J. David Slocum, 'Film Violence and the Institutionalization of the Cinema', *Social Research* Fall 2000, pp. 36-44.

2 Ibid.

3 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", *Screen* 16, no.3, 1975, pp. 6-18.

4 Ibid.


6 Ibid., p. 29.


11 Ibid., p. 29.

12 Doane, p. 20.


14 Ibid.


16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Metz, ibid.


23 Ibid., p. 20.


26 Doane, p. 32.

27 Smelik, ibid.

28 Mulvey, p. 34.

29 Quoted by Mulvey, p. 34.


31 Ibid., p. 251.


36 Mulvey, p. 20.

37 De Lauretis, p. 15.

38 Doane, p. 44.


Ibid., p.75.


De Lauretis, 1984, p.143.

Ibid., p.185.

is the work of men’ which depicts it ‘from their own point of view’ and is confused ‘with absolute truth.’ Such is the vigour of the patriarchal discourse that myths, theories, opinions, philosophies generated over centuries regarding gender hierarchies and sexual inequalities assume the status of received wisdom: ‘proving woman’s inferiority [draws] not only upon religion, philosophy and theology ... but also upon science – biology, experimental psychology.’; and it is through these discourses, contends de Beauvoir, that women learn to be object rather than subject: ‘the “true woman” is required to make herself object, to be the Other’.

These pioneering studies underpinned the radical political action of the feminist movement, offering knowledge about how the patriarchal world worked to oppress women. Drawing directly on de Beauvoir’s work allowed second-wave feminist writers to propose uncompromising cultural histories of female oppression, sexual inequality and gender exclusion: ‘culture is so saturated with male bias that women almost never have a chance to see themselves culturally through their own eyes.’ These writings not only proved useful for deconstructing patriarchal ideology in which the supremacy and importance of male subjectivity had gone unquestioned, but also identified new spaces for female resistance and the articulation of an alternative, subjective feminine experience. As an identifiable area by the 1970s, feminist theory gave voice to a female political consciousness in which the ‘personal is political’.

Molly Haskell and Marjorie Rosen’s historical studies on the treatment of women in the movies are generally considered good examples of what is commonly referred to as ‘reflection theory’. Both accounts propose uncompromising feminist critiques of how Hollywood cinema has over time repressed women through categorising female types in film: the glamour goddess, the femme fatale, the self-sacrificing mother. Another sociological approach came from Joan Mellen (1974) with her account of the sexist structures at work in European cinema. Grounding each contribution is the underlying assumption that films somehow hold up a reflective mirror to society; as Haskell declares in her introduction: ‘Movies are one of the clearest and most accessible of looking glasses into the past, being both cultural artifacts and mirrors.’ Rosen’s cultural history chronicling the changing image of the ideal Hollywood woman owes as much to de Beauvoir’s formulation of the eternal feminine myth as it does to Friedan’s thinking on socio-cultural constructions of women in. The Feminine Mystique Popcorn Venus (1973), Rosen traces how Hollywood shaped its female stars and assembled its film narratives against the backdrop of seismic social and
economic changes taking place in twentieth-century America, as ‘the industry held a warped mirror up to life’.68

Hollywood is understood by Rosen as an institution geared toward the production of patriarchal ideology and a powerful carrier of its values and ideas. Drawing explicitly on de Beauvoir’s ideas of how patriarchal cultural myths govern human perception allows Rosen to identify how film versions of femininity speak of male cultural dominance, images which in turn are offered to real women to identify with and/or adopt. These stereotypical images afford female audiences little chance for authentic recognition. Instead they produce a false consciousness for women, offering them nothing but an escape into fantasy through identification with stereotypical images: ‘How profoundly Hollywood’s values have influenced a gullible public – like myself. But why did the public – and especially its females – so passively embrace the industry’s interpretation of life?’69 Despite generating new representations that coincided with real advancements made by women, the industry’s continual depiction of women as sex objects or victims suggests to Rosen that these images spoke of patriarchal anxieties regarding the loss of male socio-economic and sexual power.

Nowhere is the site of struggle over social change and cultural representation so evident as in the figure of female stars.70 Aligned with the character she plays, the star embodies patriarchal fantasies while eliminating male fears, ‘celluloid aphrodisiacs – talking, walking and comforting a patriarchal society’.71 Yet, in being forced to live out on-screen fantasies off-screen, the women behind the icon contest and subvert what their image exemplifies to reveal contradiction. Defining the star as reflecting and misrepresenting the real leads Rosen to make an important link between text and context, in which the female star emerges as a site of contestation.

Haskell’s From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in Films (1974) is an equally uncompromising view of American cinema and its depiction of women. She narrativises the decade-by-decade shift in female representation as an arc from ‘reverence’ (the silent era) to ‘rape’ (Hollywood in the 1960s and 1970s): ‘As the propaganda arm of the American Dream machine’, and paralleling the real socio-political changes for women, the American film industry ‘maneuvered to keep women in their place’.72 Hollywood produced female ‘myths of subjection and sacrifice’.73 From the ‘Victorian virgins’ of the 1910s and 1920s to the deified sex goddesses and ‘sultry (and diabolical) femmes fatales of traditional male fantasy,’74 veneration increasingly turns to sexual violence and misogyny during the liberated 1960s. The reason for this reactive response is clear argues Haskell: The
growing strength and demands of women in real life, spearheaded by women's liberation, obviously provoked a backlash in commercial film.\textsuperscript{75}

Haskell's argument proves more complex than the trajectory of her reverence to rape thesis initially suggests. She begins by echoing de Beauvoir's thinking on how Western culture embeds women's inferiority into its social fabric: The big lie perpetrated in Western society is the idea of women's inferiority, a lie so deeply ingrained in our social behaviour that merely to recognise it is to risk unravelling the entire fabric of civilisation.\textsuperscript{76} Hollywood, as 'an industry dedicated for the most part of reinforcing the lie',\textsuperscript{77} generates and continues to perpetuate ideas of how the woman is perceived by society. And this goes for our industry also. Suggesting that cinema has historically functioned to mask female achievement and promote the male point of view prompts her to concentrate on the ways in which Hollywood movies simultaneously reproduce social realities while distorting women's experience of those realities. Yet film, she argues, represents neither a conscious conspiracy nor a particular ideological stance. Unconscious drives and cultural repression, working at a much deeper level, instead determine how women are represented on screen. Contradiction and social taboo further condition these images of an ideologically laden femininity. Her quasi-sociological approach tentatively suggests how film meaning is made by the obsessions, both conscious and unconscious, of its director as well as by other dissident opinions.

What Haskell suggests here is that a few female stars bring something else to the role while contesting the feminine stereotype she portrays in the process. Haskell and Rosen contributed a great deal to initial feminist understanding of how representation is intricately linked to patriarchal myths, values and opinions: 'Woman's image of herself is so entwined in the tangle of myths and inventions made by man that it is hard to look at it straight.'\textsuperscript{78} But their claim that cinema reduces images of women to a limited range of female stereotypes as a 'vehicle of male fantasies' and 'the scapegoat of men's fears,'\textsuperscript{79} is never proved beyond listing historical examples and sweeping claims.

These writers, while recognising the ability of the film image to naturalise what is only a projection of patriarchal ideology, were seen by other feminists as failing to provide adequate theoretical frameworks for deconstructing the complexity of what they were saying. Their theoretical assumption, founded upon the second-wave feminist presupposition of a direct relation between representation and social values fixed by ideology, could not in the opinion of Claire Johnston, Pam Cook and others – sufficiently account for how ideology functions to produce meaning within the
film text. Images do not simply reflect the social world but are ideological signifiers.

Feminists from cultural studies would in turn point to the limits of the semiotic-psychoanalytic theoretical project. Theirs instead was a debate about text and context anticipated earlier by Haskell in her useful -if uneasy -intervention related to representation and its reception. This argument is most fully developed in her chapter on the 'woman's film' of the 1930s and 1940s: Because the woman's film was designed for and tailored to a certain market, its recurrent themes represent the closest thing to an expression of the collective drives, conscious and unconscious, of American women, of their avowed obligations and their unconscious resistance. Having identified a link, Haskell assigns fixed meanings and reading positions, as if all female audiences use and understand the film text in exactly the same way. Nowhere does she address this issue in relation to how the institutional context influenced film form or its reception. Film scholars also investigated the cultural studies intervention that identified the disregard for the socio-cultural context in which female spectators watched film. It turned away from the theoretical models defined by semiotics and psychoanalysis, denouncing them as essentialist, leaving little space for 'textual negotiation' (Gledhill 1988).

Combining textual analyses with studies of audience reception and/or the economies of film culture, writers such as Christine Gledhill and Annette Kuhn identified a more complex and nuanced relationship between text, spectator and the institution of cinema. The cultural studies approach to film and the institution of cinema became less informed by an exclusive focus on the text than by ethnographic studies (Jackie Stacey and Jacqueline Bobo) or by a more interdisciplinary approach to contemporary culture (Tania Modleski and E. Ann Kaplan). Another criticism of orthodox feminist film theory came from Black feminism regarding the failure to address race and ethnicity. What this revision proposed was that the Black woman functioned as the objectified Other within (white) feminist film theory. Jane Gaines in particular pointed to the elision of race in psychoanalytic models of sexual difference.

Haskell's acknowledgement of unconscious drives anticipates later arguments by feminist theorists in the 1980s and 1990s about the role of fantasy and desire in the construction of visual pleasures as well as female subjectivity. Moving beyond the idea that male fantasy defines meaning, Haskell cautions the feminist critic from ignoring the fact that women's own 'rearguard fantasies of rape, sadism, submission, liberation and anonymous sex are as important a key to our emancipation, our self-understanding'. These interventions speak about subjectivity, sexual difference and fantasy
differently. In particular, it focuses on two phases: the 1980s and the revision of psychoanalytic theory; and the 1990s with the intervention from queer theory and lesbian/gay studies. Scholars rethought the limits of existing theories to develop ever more sophisticated readings of subjectivity, sexual difference and fantasy. In much the same way as feminist film theory sought to deconstruct the workings of a film text from various perspectives by, in the words of Annette Kuhn, 'making visible the invisible. In as much as feminist film theory aims to expose the ideological operations of patriarchy at work within textual and institutional practices, the field of feminist film studies is self-aware about the difficulties involved in articulating those arguments. Processes involved in discrediting, separating from, and even reclaiming and revising, past feminist debates reveal the perils involved in writing a feminist film theory. Another thread that this work intends is to pull out is how film feminism functions as a set of conceptual tools to articulate what can and cannot be said within dominant ideology. Speaking about such matters is to engage directly with structures of power and knowledge. Adapting a concept introduced by Tania Modleski, it is held that film feminism operates as a 'space of deferral'.

By this is meant that feminist film theory operates to open up a critical space that allows women to enter into dialogue with each other and beyond the discipline. Not only does this talk seek to make sense of representation, subjectivity and experience but also confers new revelatory truths about these issues. Taking the discourse as a whole makes known the trials and tribulations involved in the process of writing theory. For it reveals the ambiguities involved when women speak within patriarchy as well as how film feminism as a field of knowledge gives representation for better or worse to the paradox.

Beginning from the 1970's a large amount of theoretical writings appeared on the academic scene-some of which with their psychoanalytical component belong to what is called 'post-structuralism'. The relationship between film theory and revolution has been for real. But in retrospect it appears that what actually propelled the theoretical activity was, more than the revolutionary spirit, the writer's love for the cinema, 'cinephilia'.

Film theory replaced the earlier interest in film technique and became a more subtle, more refined, fetish. One way to possess the cinema is to theorize it, as Christian Metz saw so clearly and expressed somewhat belatedly. He wrote:

To be a theoretician of the cinema, one should ideally no longer love the cinema and yet still love it: have loved it a lot and just have detached oneself
from it by taking it up again from the other end, taking it as a target for the very same scopic drive (scopophilia) which had made one love it. Have broken with it, as certain relationships are broken not in order to move on to something else, but in order to return to it at the next bend of the spiral. Carry the institution inside one still so that it is in a place accessible to self-analysis, but carry it there as a distinct instance which does not over-infiltrate the rest of the ego with the thousand paralyzing bonds of a tender unconditionality. (The Imaginary Signifier, 1975).

What Metz was trying to explain with such emphasis and in such a circuitous manner was that to be a film theoretician one would need a profound experience of the cinema. But at the same time there must be break from that empirical knowledge if there is to be an ‘advance of knowledge’. The ‘hoped-for-advance of knowledge’ cannot be a continuation of the empirical knowledge of the cinema. There should be thus an epistemological break. This necessity was emphasized by all materialist thinkers. In other words, a discourse cannot be explained at the level at which it occurs. Though logicians like Bertrand Russell argued that Metz’s theory lacked logic, his writings however seek to be, if not scientific, at least scientific-in-content.

In short film theorists have argued that film theory has to be defined within the larger context of film studies and semiotics. One has to remember that the film theoretician has a special relation with film signs and that is the reason why film theory has got to be part of the larger theorizing activity of semiotics. Understanding cinema helps us to in understanding the whole universe of signs, of who make signs or who produces meanings from signs: from knowledge of the cinema to knowledge of the self in a signifying society.

After examining the sources-external as well as internal and also as the purpose of film theorizing, one can now look into the defining activity of theory itself. First of all there has been a shift in emphasis from films in general to particular types of films. Jean Mitry, for instance, who produced the monumental Esthetique et psychologie du cinema, wanted ‘not to formulate a critique of films, but to envisage conditions of cinema and the formal potential of it’s means of expression’; or again, to ‘discover in art works the practical as well as necessary conditions that make them what they are.’ An opposite approach is to consider what Roland Barthes would say as the theory itself. And this is what Dudley Andrew followed. In Concepts in Film Theory (1984) he proclaimed:

The era of pure theory is over and.... The task before us consists in confronting film concepts not with logic or with paradigms derived from other fields, but with exemplary films and sequences of films.
Almost at the same time around, Richard Roud (1980) wrote, that the most rewarding way to study cinema is by considering films and filmmakers rather than the evolution of the medium. Thus these two prolific film scholars marked the shift in concern over cinema to films.

Film theorizing would also push us to discuss the various types of discourses of film. Most discourses on film are part of the film phenomenon, a reverberation of the film experience itself. This is obvious as regards all forms of film advertisement on films, which entice the eventual cinemagoer. But film reviews play the same role, even if in a slightly more sophisticated manner. Film reviews are the appetizers that prepare the cine audience: when they are read after viewing a film, they are the liqueurs that help absorbing the film. The difference may not be very great between a piece of film criticism and a review, although the former usually requires more competence to write. Yet, from the spectator's point of view, the two forms of writing aim to fulfill similar functions. Film analysis, for all its technical jargon, is often little more than a longer film review. The review states facts and judgments about the film; the critique and analysis give reasons for the judgments and explain the facts. All these discourses-review, critique, analysis- are uttered, as it were, from within the film experience and, as such, they are parts of the film phenomenon. They ultimately serve in helping the audience undergo the experience; they do not enlighten the audience on that experience.

Feminist film theory over the past two decades has focused on the visual representation of women as spectacle. Kaja Silverman (1980) argued that it is the notion about classical cinema as a whole being constructed visually and acoustically to shore up a male subjectivity, with the man not only in control of the gaze but also of the authorial voice. Sound in cinema is paradoxically used to 'silence' women, say feminist film scholars, which is made possible by certain underlying premises: the myth of woman's 'naturally' less powerful voice, and 'a cultural distaste' for women's voices. The motor of feminist film theory however, as Teresa asserted in 1985, is no longer only one of "disrupting man-centered vision by representing its blind spots, its gaps or its repressed," but also "one of attending to the creation of another - feminine or feminist - vision".

The Project of Feminine Visions

A nostalgic return to the unwritten body is not conceivable. Before moving on to the project of feminine vision, filmmaker Peter Gidal, who, in attempting to articulate the relationship between his own filmmaking practice and feminist concerns, draws a (logical?) conclusion: "In terms of the feminist struggle specifically, I have had a vehement refusal over the last decade ... to allow images of women into my films at all, since I do not see how those
images can be separated from the dominant meanings." This is what Bombay cinema need to inculcate and envisage pertaining to the portrayal of women on the screens. This, however, as Mary Anne puts it, is the extreme formulation of a project which can define itself only in terms of negativity. And the feminine community, developing its own visions, is certainly not enthusiastic about it or even willing to collaborate in patriarchy's plot of rendering women invisible.

Early feminist filmmaking addressed subjects such as violence against women, day care, laboring, payment, sexual harassment, and aging. Other films honored the involvement of women in historical events or featured personality portrayals dedicated to outstanding individuals. They were movies like Rosie the Riveter or Union Maids, shot with docufictional techniques in cinéma vérité style, with distinct elements of collectivism, allowing the interviewed subjects to participate in the film production process and transcending the political motifs and aims of the filmmakers. Already in 1972, Johnston had called not only for a cinema originating from women which would produce new images, but for a cinema different in form and content: "In rejecting a sociological analysis of women in the cinema we reject any view in terms of realism, for this would involve a denial of the reality of the myth of operation." What Claire demands is a deconstructive cinema, a 'counter-cinema', rejecting illusionistic realism by rupturing narrative flow and interrogating the process of filmmaking.

Thus, contemporary filmmaking addresses itself to the activity of uncoding, de-coding, deconstructing the given images, a process of de-familiarization, whose aim is not so much that of seeing the female body differently, but of exposing the habitual meanings and values attached to femininity as cultural constructions. Here only a few examples may suffice: In The Camera: Je / La Caméra: Eye, Babette (Mangolte) explores the relations of power sustained within the camera-subject nexus. The discomfort of the subjects posing for the camera, together with the authority of the off-screen voice giving instructions ("smile", "look to the left") challenge the photographic image's claim to naturalism and spontaneity. And, most interestingly, the protagonists, whether male or female, inevitably appear to assume a mask of 'femininity' in order to became photographic - as though femininity were synonymous with the pose.

What is at work behind these idealized images of women? How can we understand their appeal to an audience of both men and women? If we were to review some theoretical models that might help us explain both how these images might have been "consumed" by their viewers, and the "cultural work" these images might also have performed.
Psychoanalytic theorists, following in the footsteps of Freud and Lacan, have established that humans experience “pleasure” in the act of looking, particularly in looking at images of the human form. However, theorists diverge on exactly how this “pleasure in looking” varies across the axis of sex and gender, particularly in relation to the medium of film. Laura Mulvey’s 1975 groundbreaking essay on the “male gaze” spawned a generation of theoretical work on the pleasures of “the gaze,” including work that complicates Mulvey’s model by introducing issues of sexual orientation and race as well. Nevertheless, as Gillian Rose points out in Visual Methodologies (2001), her analysis of theories and methods for examining the visual, psychoanalysis – as a methodology – still falls short in assuming an “ideal” viewing subject (whether “male/female,” “white/black” or “straight/lesbian/queer”). In general, what this model has lacked is attention to the specific historically-determined social practices that often determine viewing practices. Accordingly, some psychoanalysts have turned to other theoretical models to locate viewing practices within their particular historical moments.

Much of this discussion of socially-determined viewing practices can be traced to the work of Michel Foucault and “discourse theory.” Psychoanalytic theorist Kaja Silverman traces one such shift in “nineteenth-century discourses, from painting and the novel to psychoanalysis and photography” by examining the work of J.C. Flugel on men’s fashion. According to Flugel, beginning around 1750, in what Flugel calls “the Great Masculine Renunciation,” men began to give up bright colors and “male finery” in fashion and self-presentation. Silverman argues that this “despecularization of the male subject” led to the subsequent “hyperspecularization of the female subject.” This “hyperspecularization” certainly seems to be at work in these idealized images of women in the films analysed.

Semiotics is another theoretical model that is useful for “decoding” these visual images. In a series of lectures Course on General Linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure, considered one of the “fathers” of semiotics, argued that language is a “sign system” composed of a “signified” (a concept), a “signifier,” (the sound attached to that concept) and “referent” (the object in the real world to which the signifier and signified point). Roland Barthes applied Saussure’s sign system to a study of photographs and other cultural “signs.” Barthes’ essays, originally published in French magazines between 1954 and 1956, and collected in Mythologies, treated photographs and other “sign” systems operating in French culture. In this respect Barthes’ work parallels that of Erwin Panofsky in art history, who argues that painting, and other forms of art, can best be interpreted by reference to their “iconography,” or system of symbols and signs. Stuart Hall extended semiotic theory to
other cultural forms, particularly television, by distinguishing between a society’s “dominant codes” (those generally imposed by those in social, cultural and political control of a society), “negotiated codes,” (those that acknowledge dominant interpretations, but in some way challenge these codes) and “oppositional codes” (those interpretations that operate in resistance to the dominant codes). Whether we use the terms “signifier/signified,” “iconographic symbols,” or “codes,” what we refer to in these images is the relationship between specific details and how these details would be “read” or “understood” by their reader/viewers.

Another type of discourse, theory, however, seeks to enlighten the audience on their experience. The root meaning of the word ‘theory’ is to look at. A theory is a look at something. By looking one establishes and maintains a distance between oneself and that which one looks at. Hence a film theory is a discourse parallel to the film discourse. It can aid in gaining knowledge of and about films. This knowledge, is however, indirectly related to filmmaking. Like Eisenstein said, ‘when I create, I do not explain.’

Parallel to the film discourse, the film theory discourse creates a context—or to use Julia Kristeva’s word- an ‘intertext’ which makes it possible to enunciate not only a possible meaning of the film but also its eventual significance to particular viewers. In this way film theory breaks off from the film under study but relinks it ‘from the other side.’

It was again Kaja Silvermann (1988) who drew on Lacanian psychoanalysis and postulates that each subject is structured by lack or symbolic castration. In our societies however, the female subject is made to bear the burden of that lack to provide the male subject with the illusion of wholeness and unity. She asserts that in cinema this displacement is enacted not only through the gazer and the image but also through its auditory register. ‘Contrary to the mere frequent disembodiment of the male voice in cinema, the female voice is restricted to the realm of the body’ (Smelik, 1998). This keeps the female outside its discourse. The female voice never reaches a significant position in language, meaning or power and is thereby relegated to mere screams, babble or silence in dominant cinema worldwide.

This theoretical basis helps to understand the large domain of commercial Hindi films in order to unearth the hidden secrets of our socialisation with the help of psychological, sociological tools.

It can be said with no exaggeration that without women there would be no cinema. Sadly, this is so not because the natural concerns of genuine womanhood have been addressed in film, but because from the very
beginnings of cinema a woman has been made the centerpiece of attraction, an object of desire. This systematic cultivation of women as objects of desire has been akin to the gradual process of drug addiction: at first, the effects were rather mild and pleasantly stimulating - and thus considered not only harmless by both men and women, but even liberating - however, as time went on and doses increased, a feverish state of dependency set in. What has started out as a quest for liberation from convention, ended up being a different form of enslavement. Today women can be seen to have divided themselves into roughly two groups: those, who continue to perceive this enslavement as "liberation"; and those, who vaguely sense that the real search for the true liberation of women has not even begun.

Cinema, in particular, has made a devastating contribution here. One definition of 99% of cinema would be to say that it specializes in creating beauty-substitutes. Through personality cults of stars, through promotion of escapism into fantasy, it creates images, which encourage superficiality and vanity - the two qualities that are already sufficiently developed as it is within all of us. And since women, due to their superior intuitive faculty, are more susceptible to suggestions through imagery than men, the effect on the female population has been nothing short of catastrophic.

One can thus chart the development of feminist film theory and the theorising of cinema in relation to the issues raised by feminist inquiry from the early 1970s to the present. The broad range of knowledges produced by film feminism is quite extraordinary, dependent upon different aims, objectives and intellectual interests. This section aims to document this dynamic critical field of feminist film studies – to chart the numerous feminist interventions and to critically think about how the socio-historical, political and cultural contexts shaped what was said and how it was said.

The body of work called feminist film theory and criticism has played a crucial – and often controversial – role in the emergence of film studies as an academic discipline; in turn, film studies shaped feminist concerns as well as granted feminist research a space to flourish. Demonstrating an awareness of the origins and influences that shape feminist film theory may help us rethink our ideas about how a field of knowledge is determined. In knowing how film feminism formed, we may also learn what it wants us to know and how individual theoretical texts fit into a larger field of study. Feminist film theory is a very particular type of theory, conceived from disciplines beyond its borders such as (post) structuralism, psychoanalysis, post-colonialism and queer theory as well as generated from inside film studies. Studying the field of knowledge known as feminist film studies allows us to read it as a set of
statements about the institution of cinema and cultural production, about representational categories and gendered subjectivity, about identification and spectatorship practices, about cultural authority and historical (in)visibility, about desire and fantasy, and about the interaction between these areas.

Though there is hardly a space for female desire on Bollywood's shelves, western feminism helps to understand the involvement of feminine identification with the images on the screen. They repeatedly stress on the double 'identification theory' where the female audiences take up both active and passive positions of desire. For Indian audiences female pleasurability is an alien or perhaps a sacrilegious concept, therefore it never appears in the narratives of popular Hindi cinema. 'Desire for the other and desire to be desired by the other' translates into the desire to be the other (Woman) and thus seduces them into felinity. The notion of the female then seems to be a contradiction in terms so much so that De Lauretis sometime refers to the female subject as 'non-subject.' 'Woman' is fundamentally unrepresentable as subject of desire; she can only be represented as a representation. Feminist theory in a way is paradoxical because it showcases the unrepresentability of women as subject of desire and also historical women who know themselves to be as subjects. The problem of the audience has long troubled both histories and theories of film. The films themselves still present solid textual evidence, as do the technologies used to both make and exhibit them. Less palpable, though, is the audience, which is aggravating because it is the audience, it may be argued, which constitutes the cinema's raison d'etre.
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