Parallax Historiography: The Flâneuse as Cyberfeminist

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"Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves. This is a dream not of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia." Donna Haraway

Haraway's cyborg manifesto may seem an odd choice of theoretical paradigms for developing insight into silent cinema; and yet I would like to suggest that new media technologies have created new theoretical "passages" back to the first decades of film history. The flâneuse, an imaginary construction of female subjectivity who is our guide in this journey, is herself a cyborg. She figures the relationship between women and technology as a mobile, fluid and productive means of, in Haraway's words, "building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, spaces, stories" (1997: 482). Recent developments in film historiography by feminist theorists have shifted the emphasis from textual analysis of the woman onscreen to the invisible history of the spectator-subject. As Patrice Petro puts it, "In contrast to formalist film historians, who seek to recover what is increasingly becoming a lost object, feminists have been primarily concerned to unearth the history of the (found) female subject" (1990: 11). This is a discovery that calls for discourse drawn from the utopian genres of techno-feminism.

That this "discovery" of female subjectivity has been motivated by the parallels between early cinema and new imaging technologies is, I believe, a fundamental aspect of the new feminist film historiography. The term "parallax" is useful to describe this historiography, because it is a term that invokes a shift in perspective as well as a sense of parallelism. In this article I want to explore the parallels between visual culture at the beginning and end of the twentieth century, and also the historical effects of this parallax historiography: what does it say about history alongside what it says about cinema? I will suggest that it constitutes a real challenge to the hegemony of classicism and all that it entails within the discourse of film studies. I will argue that parallax historiography is a discursive formation that is premised on the archival function of new technologies that enable us to rewrite film history; and also that this rewriting constitutes a valuable revision of the modernity of cinema as a site of shifting identities and viewing positions.

In the early 1990s three books appeared on silent cinema that, taken together, articulate a new perspective on the first decades of film, a perspective that is very much formed by the transformations of visual culture at the end of the century. Miriam Hansen's book *Babel and Babylon* (1991), Anne Friedberg's *Window Shopping* (1992), and Giuliana Bruno's *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map* (1993), share a very specific historical perspective on cinema spectatorship. Although they appear to be somewhat conversant with each other's projects, these three writers seem to have worked through a similar set of problematics more or less independently. For each of them, the parallels between early cinema and late twentieth century visual culture constitute a bracketing of "classical cinema" as an intermediary period.

The most important link between pre- and post-classical cinema, and what motivates this parallax historiography, is a construction of spectatorship that challenges the unitary, transcendental spectator-position of the classical period. Before and after classical cinema, spectatorship is conceived as more fluid, mobile, unstable and heterogeneous than the limited position of "mastery" that has been theorized as both masculinist and bourgeois.

The parallels between the avant-garde cinema of the 1960s and 1970s with early cinema were instrumental in the rethinking of pre-classical cinema as an integrated, autonomous practice deserving of close study when film scholars turned their attention to it in the late 1970s. And yet, the implied "eclipse" of the classical period, the reduction of classical cinema to an historical blip in the middle of the twenieth century, is an important consequence of this most recent incarnation of parallax film historiography. Hansen has herself posed a series of questions regarding the parallels between early and what she calls "late" cinema. She asks, "What is the point of such a comparison? How can we make it productive beyond formalist analogy, beyond nostalgia or cultural pessimism? How can we align those two moments without obliterating their historical difference?" (1994: 140)

Hansen's own response is to think about larger transitions in the development of the public sphere that occur at either end of the century. The potential of the cinema to produce an "alternative public sphere" is manifest in the specific forms of reception and exhibition of the two periods. In other words, unlike the earlier parallelism between the avant-garde and so-called primitive cinema, there is no real formal analogy between the two periods in this parallax historiography. That is to say, the works of the two periods may not look the same, but they have similar functions in the public sphere. Hansen focuses on the interactivity of audience-film relations in both periods, and the ways that "marginalized and diverse constituencies" are addressed. Early and late cinemas do not, she argues, have a homogenizing effect on the diversity of spectators, but enable subcultural formations of reception. The historical interlude of classical cinema also marks the brevity of "mass culture," which may have dominated visual culture from the 1920s into the 1960s (1994: 136) but, Hansen argues, has given way to "the diversifications of global electronic media" (1994: 148).

Thus, for Hansen, "late cinema" refers specifically to shifts in the public sphere, brought about by new technologies of distribution and exhibition of visual culture. The term invokes the equally indeterminate categories of "post-classical" and "post-modern" cinemas, which imply corresponding shifts in industry practices and aesthetics. If "postclassical" cinema refers to the stylistic and institutional changes in Hollywood films since the 1960s' dissolution of the "classical" system of studio production (Kramer, 1998), "post-modern" cinema refers to the shifts in spectatorship entailed by that dissolution. Timothy Corrigan argues that "in the contemporary cinema without walls, audiences remove images from their own authentic and authoritative place within culture and disperse the significance across the heterogeneous activity that now defines them" (1991: 6). "Late cinema" denotes the historical significance of these shifts as being on a threshold. And it is this sense of a cusp between "the decline of classical humanism" and the "possibility for multiple and polymorphous re-embodiments" engendered by new imaging technologies that is encompassed by the term "late cinema." For Rosi Braidotti, postmodernity is most importantly a "threshold of new re-locations for cultural practice" (1997: 521), which includes a shift toward more imaginative styles of theorizing (525). The parallax historiography of early and late cinemas, featuring the flâneuse as the mobile, virtual spectator, is precisely such an instance of postmodern feminist historiography.

Equally uncertain is the designation "early cinema" in Hansen's analysis of the parallels between the two periods. While "early cinema" often refers to the cinema before 1905, in Thomas Elsaesser's influential anthology *Early Cinema* it refers to the cinema before 1917. Hansen's theorization of the public sphere of silent film in *Babel and Babylon*, however, covers the entire silent period, to the end of the 1920s. Without losing sight of the immense changes in institutions and aesthetics that took place over the first thirty-five years of the cinema, we can also point to the continuity of woman's contradictory role throughout this period. During the slow transformation of "the cinema of attractions" into "classical cinema" women were at once fetishized, terrorized and stereotyped onscreen, while being courted as potential consumers and spectators off-screen (Singer, 1990; Studlar, 1996). To the extent that this constellation of effects was sustained throughout the silent period--until women got their voices--for the purposes of this essay I would like to designate "early cinema" as more or less synonymous with silent cinema. This is in keeping with Hansen's call for an alternative view of film history that would include all the extra-institutional aspects of the cinematic experience that enabled female spectators to construct imaginative responses to onscreen images, by extending the "space" of the film into public life (1990: 66).

Architectures of Reception

The model of spectatorship that Bruno, Friedberg and Hansen coincidentally describe is best thought of as a counter-apparatus theory. By locating early cinema within a complex cultural space of architecture, theatre, journalism, and a diversity of popular entertainments, the activity of film-viewing is conceived as a function of everyday life. Moreover, the mobility of the spectator through the diversity of spectacles, along with the role of intertextuality in early cinema, renders the viewer's participation highly interactive. If the spectator-position of apparatus theory aligns viewing with transcendental forms of consciousness and the illusions of visual mastery, the spectator of early and late cinema is an embodied, socially configured and heterogeneous construction. Classical cinema becomes aligned with apparatus theory, and designates a period in which the cinema acquired a certain autonomy from other mediums of representation.

Although parallax historiography may have evolved along with real changes in cinematic production, exhibition and spectatorship, it also implies a critique of the discursive alignment of classical cinema and apparatus theory. We should be suspicious of the conflation of an historical period with a theory of spectatorship. None of the authors actually go so far as to make such a critique; indeed "late cinema" is defined by Hansen and Friedberg as constituting a break with classicism. And yet in advocating and developing an alternative theory of spectatorship, these theorists are also impinging on the very framework of the classical period. In her discussion of Rudolph Valentino and female spectatorship in the 1920s, Hansen promotes the identification of spectators who read "against the grain" of the classical text, and encourages an appreciation of the diversity within "classical cinema" (1991: 245-268). The most radical effect of parallax historiography may be an ultimate denial of the existence of classical cinema and its constitutive forms of spectatorship. Perhaps classical cinema was only a mode of viewing and theorizing film; perhaps Laura Mulvey's call for "passionate detachment" has always been an option for viewing that is only fully realized in early and "late" cinemas, precisely because of their architectures of reception.

By noting the dispersed and fragmented modes of spectatorship common to early and late cinemas, we can perhaps understand how important architecture is to notions of spectator "positioning." The ideal of classical narrative cinema, theorized by Christian Metz, fixes the

gaze of the spectator onto the projector/camera's line of sight. In retrospect, this constitutes a denial of the gaze that looks "nearby" (Trinh, 1992: 96), the sideways glance, and the possibilities of assuming alternative viewing positions. Such assumptions of classicism as a monolithic apparatus tended to collapse important distinctions between genres and modes of film practice that, in fact, solicit very different forms of spectatorship (Williams, 1994). Why should we deny the potentials for distracted, resistant and differently gendered viewers seated in the thousands of film theatres all over the world? (See Appendix One) Parallax historiography suggests that apparatus theory was itself an ideological production of mass culture, a construction which reproduced, in theory, a specific architecture of reception.

The importance of architecture as a context of film viewing is one of the central contributions of Giuliana Bruno's work on early cinema. The central figure of her book is Elvira Notari, a prolific Neapolitan filmmaker whose work had been largely overlooked by historians of Italian cinema. Notari's films, many of them filmed on the streets of Naples, were screened in theatres incorporated into the huge Gallerias, glass-covered shopping malls that became important social centres in late nineteenth century Europe. Bruno describes the Neapolitan version of a phenomenon that existed in many metropolitan centres:

> the Galleria extended the function of the piazza (forum), the Italian urban site of meeting and promenade, social events, and transitory activities. It represented the coalescence and transformation of public life, typically and traditionally set in urban piazza, into modern terms. Cinema, housed in the arcade, was thus grounded in a locus of spectacle and circulation of people and goods, in a metropolitan site of diverse social configurations--from those of a social elite and intelligentsia to that of the underworld (1993: 43).

These Arcades are of course the focus of Walter Benjamin's great unfinished key-work of cultural studies. It is important to keep in mind that he describes these structures as the allegorical ruins of the nineteenth century lingering into the twentieth. He perceived them as "passages" through time as well as through space. Bruno and Friedberg both take this is as a cue for their own work on early cinema, as a means of framing their investigations from the perspective of a much later date. Cinema in the passages, or Arcades, is seen as the emblem of a version of modernity that aims to challenge the different modernity of classical cinema. Theirs is an inverted modernism, one that looks "back to the future" as a means of locating a different formation of the modern subject. All three writers quote Benjamin's words from "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction":

> Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung debris, we calmly and adventurously go travelling (1969: 236).

As we know, it is not only the implantation of cinema in the shopping arcades of the turn of the century that preoccupied Benjamin, but its role in urban, metropolitan culture. He linked cinematic effects of montage and spatial construction to the psychological experience of big city life. The stimulus and shock of traffic, of the crowd, of the dense fragmentation of space, have been recognized as determining factors of the first two decades of film culture (Singer, 1995). Benjamin's notion of "shock" is at once a means of describing the aesthetics of early

cinema, and the spectator's experience of everyday life, in which the cinema is implicitly implicated.

Benjamin's theorization of cinema and modernity in fact informs the parallax historiography of early and late cinema on a number of different levels. The loss of "aura" that he attributes to mechanically reproduced art is the basis of this historiography insofar as electronic media represent another stage in the transformation of the public sphere. The loss of "aura" does not refer to an attitude of nostalgia towards that which is vanishing, but to a perspective of historical transformation that is fundamentally utopian in nature. In contrast to a teleological or evolutionary historiography of "progress", Benjamin advocates a dialectical historiography. Within the context of the Arcades project, Benjamin wrote:

> The dialectical image is an image that emerges suddenly, in a flash. What has been is to be held fast - as an image flashing up in the now of its recognizability. The rescue that is carried out by these means - and only by these - can operate solely for the sake of what in the next moment is already irretrievably lost. (1999: 473).

The correspondence between early and late cinema is constructed as a dialectical relation in which the electronic age plays the role that photographic technologies played in the early decades of the century. If in the cinema Benjamin recognized the traces of earlier forms of experience sustained allegorically in what he called "the land of technology", we need to ask if there is a parallel redemptive effect in this second stage, this corresponding shift in the technologies of representation at the end of the century. Insofar as electronic imaging technologies are themselves a means of retrieving the past in visual form, the "redemptive effect" lies precisely in the production of an historically mobile spectatorship.

Bruno mentions "airplane cinema" as a recent incarnation of the implantation of cinema in architectures of transit. She claims that "embodying the dynamics of journey, cinema maps a heterotopic topography," "a site whose system of opening and closing both isolates it and makes it impenetrable, as it forms a type of elsewhere/nowhere" (1993: 57), a description that seems to fit nothing as well as it does the internet, although she is referring to the cinema of the first decades of the century. In a more recent article, Bruno has developed her observations on the architectures of early cinema into a larger theorization of the cinematic experience as a haptic, transitory, inhabitation of space. She writes:

> Locked within a fixed gaze, the film spectator was turned into a *voyeur*. Speaking of siteseeing implies that, because of film's spatio-corporeal kinetics, the spectator is a *voyageur* rather than a *voyeur*. Through this shift to *voy(ag)eur*, my aim is to reclaim female mobility, arguing, from the position of a (film) *voyageuse*, that film is a modern cartography. It is a mobile map (1997: 10).

Implicit in Bruno's rethinking of cinema spectatorship is an alliance between the implantation of silent cinema in the metropolis, and the travelling afforded by the internet and channel surfing. The dethronement of the eye as the key instrument of visual culture constitutes her feminist challenge to theories of cinema as voyeurism and mastery.

Hansen, for her part, claims that it is the video market that has made "the classical spectator an object of nostalgic contemplation" (1991: 3). It is within the specific framework of the

disintegrating aura that the alternative public sphere, as a "heterogenous, and at times unpredictable horizon of experience" is made possible. The plurality of spectatorship is inscribed within the sites and conditions of reception--in addition to forms of textual address, which conceptions of classical cinema struggled to unify and universalize. The most important effect of parallax historiography on contemporary visual practice is to consider it as an opening up of new forms of spectatorship, ones which may have some parallels in the visual culture of a hundred years ago, but more significantly, transforms the public sphere of classical cinema into a vanishing form of experience. In fact the eclipse of the "subject" of classical film narrative may not be an occasion for nostalgia at all, because this unitary (male) subject may not even have existed outside the theoretical discourses of "mass media" and psychoanalytic semiotics.

Of the three writers, Friedberg comes closest to erasing classicism, although even she does not make such a claim, perhaps because she is interested in the changes brought about by "postmodern" modes of viewing. She goes much further than either Hansen or Bruno in describing the changes in visual culture effected by electronic media. Televisual spectatorship constitutes a fundamentally different form of subjectivity, one that is distinguished above all by its temporal dislocations. For Friedberg VCR time-shifting--the ability to record TV shows, and the ability to interfere with a film's narrative temporality during playback--is the most significant shift in the public sphere of electronic media. She further links this temporal mobility to the spatial mobility of multiplex film exhibition located in shopping malls. The idea is that spectators "shop" for movies in the video store, in the shopping mall, via channel surfing, or eventually, on the internet (although Friedberg does not include the net in this 1993 book).

Friedberg also maps the parallels between early cinema and postmodernism most thoroughly. Her model of "the mobile virtual gaze" is what links these two periods, and what differentiates them from classical cinema. The temporal and spatial mobility of the gaze is developed in nineteenth century forms of tourism and travel before it is inscribed in cinematic representation; the virtual aspect of the gaze precedes the cinema in the array of dioramas, panoramas, wax museums and photography. The mobile, virtual gaze refers to the consumer-as-subject in visual culture; Friedberg argues that the spectator-shopper "tries on identities" and time travels through film and cultural history. If internet chat rooms are the apotheosis of this "trying on of identities," classical cinema is a throwback to a static novelistic form, a discursive trap that prevented the medium from realizing its true heritage as a phenomenon of urban, global culture.

Friedberg argues that "Postmodernity is marked by the increasing centralization of features implicit (from the start) in cinema spectatorship" (1993: 179). She goes on to say that, "The subjectivity of the 'postmodern condition' appears to be a product of the industrialized acceleration of spatial and temporal fluidities"--dynamics that were commodified in the middle of the nineteenth century (179). The implication is that electronic imaging technologies are the realization of various effects of modernity that were originally inscribed in cinema, but were unrecognizable until the late twentieth century. The cinema in this reading is a passage through, or across time, that enables us to understand modernity differently. The parallax historiography of early and late cinema is thus not really about cinema at all, but about modernity. Film studies' preoccupation with formalism and narratology has masked the modernity of the public sphere that the cinema continues to construct and reconstruct.

If new electronic media and digital forms of representation do represent a loss of cinematic "aura," it is referentiality itself that is lost. The "secondariness" of Benjaminian allegory has become a more radical detachment of signification in an era of digital image processing, so that images themselves become the substance of a materialist culture. The surfaces, styles and textures of the past become a phantasmagoria of history. Benjamin's theory of representation is, however, one that is already built on a temporality of displacement and loss; if parallax historiography encourages us to understand contemporary image culture differently, I would argue that it foregrounds the archival function of postmodern recycling practices. The American Library of Congress has made part of its collection of early cinema available on the internet; and one can "travel" on the internet to the website of the American Mutoscope and Bioscope Company, where one can virtually visit its New York studios of the 1890s, and buy an array of merchandise, including screen-savers and videos. The marketing of early cinema in the late 1990s is not only made possible by the internet, but it is new media that has made early cinema into a consumable product. Teaching silent cinema becomes easier every year, as more resources become available in electronic form. What is lost in terms of "auratic experience" is gained in terms of the expanding repertoire of image culture, a repertoire in which the loss of experience is unambiguously inscribed.

Digital imaging technologies enable a redemption of media culture in their archival function, but for feminist film historians, it is most definitely not "nostalgia" that informs the backward view into history. In the gendered world of silent cinema, parallax historiography scans the texts for clues to the women who watched them, without fixing our gaze on the "images of women" that those women were offered. The critic's gaze, like the spectators of silent cinema, is a "mobile, virtual gaze" that is both spatially and temporally discontinuous. I would argue that this form of spectatorship is a key element in the conception of "late cinema" developed within parallax film historiography. When we shop for films on video, we can shop for historical moments; and we can perform a kind of rescue of the female gaze, if not save the emblematic woman tied to the tracks.

The Flâneuse

The different kind of modernity that is developed in parallax historiography finds its most sustained model in the flâneur who was introduced by Charles Baudelaire as a "passionate spectator" of "the flickering grace of all the elements of life" (1978: 9). The man in the crowd who transforms urban space into a kaleidoscope of imagery, who is at once detached and himself part of the spectacle, becomes, for Benjamin, the aura of heroism in modern life, an essentially melancholy figure (1983: 66). Flânerie constitutes the activity of living in public, of moving through city streets, a form of subjectivity in transit. For the nomadic flâneur, the street becomes a home, while the buildings and the cityscape provide the contours of the rooms in which he dwells. Thus the cinema, as an extension of flânerie, inverts this spatial mobility, rendering the interior of the theatre an exterior space in which to wander. But flânerie equally refers to a specifically modernist temporality. If the Benjaminian flâneur sees the traces of experience, of previous times within the fashions of commodity culture, the film spectator likewise sees "reality" as an allegorical, secondary representation--as a virtuality. The flâneur thus brings together all the key themes of parallax historiography: spatial and temporal dislocation, and mobile spectatorship within a public sphere of visual culture that includes the cinema within a larger field of technologies, mediums and architectures of reception.

For both Baudelaire and Benjamin, the flâneur was indisputably male. Chief among the sights of the city through which he wandered was the prostitute, herself a streetwalker, as the title of Bruno's book reminds us. In mid-nineteenth century Paris, as Baudelaire's discourse of modernity unfolded, women were part of the phantasmagoria of commodity culture, evoking in the male poet a complex desire for the mass-produced, modern object. She functioned as an emblem of the intersubjectivity of flânerie, the object that "looks back" in a distanced, allegorical way. One of the things that Benjamin is particularly drawn to in Baudelaire's poetry of modernity is the frozen gaze of the women. Their eyes are "polished"; they are "illuminated like shop windows." The woman's glance figures prominently in Baudelaire's poetry, but it is a dangerous, fleeting look that causes the flâneur no end of anxiety (Benjamin, 1983: 149-50; 124-25). The woman on the street provokes a specific form of modern subjectivity, but she herself is denied subjectivity.

Contemporary feminism has grappled with the notion of the flâneuse, a female incarnation of the flâneur. Janet Wolff has argued that the flâneuse is an impossible concept because of the engendering of modernity that could not account for the presence of women in the public sphere (1990: 47). It was impossible for women who were "on the streets" to gain the invisibility of the flâneur. While men could observe the parade of modernity from the cloak of anonymity, women needed to go in drag to achieve such freedom. Wolff quotes George Sand who had to adopt the dress and manner of the male flâneur to move about Paris freely (1990: 148; Gleber, 1997: 59). It is well established that women of many classes and occupations were a visible presence on the metropolitan streets of Europe and North America since the mid-nineteenth century, although, as Anke Gleber puts it, "they didn't own the streets" (1997: 61). Insofar as the predominant image of the woman on the street was the prostitute, for whom the street was her work place, the visibility of women was closely linked to a sexual threat. For the male flâneur this produced a paranoid fear of losing himself in the erotic charge of city streets (von Ankum, 1997: 164-165). The sight of unaccompanied single women was a catalyst for the eroticisation of femininity in public life, such that the modernity of urban space was explicitly feminized by many writers of the early twentieth century (Petro, 1997). Writing about the display of women in the cinema of attractions, Constance Balides argues that "in rehearsing the boundaries of space, the films point to the way the scandal of prostitution - its everyday visibility - could attach itself to women more generally" (1998: 75).

As a conceptual paradigm, "the flâneuse" is a means of refiguring the sexualized, fetishized inhabitant of the city as an agent of spectatorial activity, whose power rests not only in her eye, but in her mobility as well. Gleber has suggested that the "discovery" of the female flâneur "would offer an alternative to woman's status as an image," inscribing a model of resistance for woman (1997: 78-79). Friedberg and Bruno have both revised the notion of the flâneuse to recover some of the power that is latent in the female look described by Baudelaire. What he saw only as a "glance" or a "stare" was in fact developed as a "gaze" by an emergent consumer culture. Friedberg argues that the female consumer was addressed directly as a flâneuse by the department stores and arcades of the nineteenth century. Moreover, the relation between looking and buying that was configured in the increased emphasis on display and shop windows constructed the flâneuse as a mobile spectator. The mobile, virtual gaze that is institutionalized in the cinema thus had its origins in a consumer culture and its coextensive production of female subjectivity. Bruno further develops this version of the flâneuse into the psychological space of fantasy opened up by the cinema:

> Cinema provided a form of access to public space, an occasion to socialize and get out of the house. Going to the cinema triggered a liberation of the woman's gaze, enabling her to renegotiate, on a new terrain of intersubjectivity, the configuration of private/public (1993: 51).

Female spectatorship, theorized on the model of the flâneuse, is a function of shopping and consuming. To the extent that cinema is inscribed within consumer culture, it realizes the potential of image culture to provide an alternative public sphere for women. It is a model that tends to negate narrative forms of identity formation and subject-positioning, in favour of the activity of movie-going as one among many urban pleasures. Miriam Hansen does not invoke the figure of the flâneuse herself, but describes the alternative public sphere of early cinema as a space where the "conditions of possibility" of a "tradition of female spectatorship" can be traced (1991: 125). She concedes that this function may not be measurable "in any empirical sense", and yet textual and extratextual evidence suggests that "a commercially fostered threat to the male monopoly of the gaze" circulated within the public sphere of early cinema (121).

Among the many films that were popular among women were the "white slavery films" of the teens (Lindsey, 1991), a cycle that was indisputably stimulated by the anxiety provoked by the visibility of women on metropolitan streets (Lindsey, 1991; Gunning, 1997). This small "genre" of white slavery films was spawned by *Traffic in Souls* (1913), a film that Tom Gunning has suggested, initiated the "urban thriller" genre that we now associate with film noir. Gunning argues that the city in *Traffic in Souls* prefigures the omniscient underground systems that Fritz Lang would develop in the 1920s. He describes these networks as "impersonal systems of entrapment, both legal and illegal, a traffic which pulses beneath the city's surface, determining direction and circulation beyond our will or even our knowledge." In the narrative logic of the film, this system "has its origins in the contradictory relation of the figure of the prostitute to the categories of visuality and urban space" (1997: 52).

If these decentralized systems described by Gunning evoke the hidden web of communications technology that has begun to replace urban space in the twenty-first century, the flâneuse assumes her place as the cyberfeminist who has displaced the voyeur. In Sadie Plant's technofeminism, the triumph of technology is a triumph over "man" and his dualistic categories of "humanity". "With the development of self-regulating systems, man has finally made nature work, but now it no longer works for him. It is as though humanity was simply the means by which the global system, the matrix, built itself; as if history was merely the prehistory of cyberfeminism" (Plant, 1997: 508). Thus the flâneuse is a figure who may well be fictional, who may even be a parodic figure, but is above all, a projection of feminism onto a history of oppression. Parody, argues Braidotti, is an important strategy for "opening up, through successive repetitions and mimetic strategies, spaces where forms of feminist agency can be engendered" (526).

Parallax Historiography

Shopping and other forms of entertainment and spectacle flank early cinema in much the same way as contemporary theatre and TV advertising contextualize film viewing at the end of the century. Indeed channel surfing and internet browsing again suggest themselves as parallel models of spectatorship. However, we don't tend to think of these modes of spectatorship as particularly or necessarily relevant to female viewers. It may only be through the parallax effect of this historiography that they become the terrain of the flâneuse. In fact

the parallels between contemporary forms of spectatorship and those of early cinema are only partial. To the extent that we are witnessing a proliferation of new modes of viewing film at home, a domestication of visual culture, we are in the midst of a devolution of the urban setting of the cinema. The cinematic public sphere is being reconfigured as an "emergency geography" of disparate moments, locations and viewers (Corrigan, 1997). Numerous theorists have described the different temporality of video culture as non-linear and instantaneous--a state of perpetual catastrophe in which the fragmentation effect of image culture has moved onto a fundamentally different level than the fragmentation provoked by the metropolitan culture of the early twentieth century (Corrigan, 1997; Doane, 1990; Doane, 1996).

If cities contain the traces and ruins of previous generations layered over each other, digital technologies produce new structures of memorialization in which fragments are recombined and recontextualized in new architectures of reception, including the classroom, the compilation film, and the digital image-banks of electronic storage. Relocated in the archive, early cinema is remade and rethought along the lines of the invisible, impossible flâneuse; modernity itself is thus engendered differently as the cultures of shopping and image consumption are seen to collide. It is an invented, fantastic, even literary form of historiography based more on contemporary desires for new models of female spectatorship than on empirical evidence or historical documentation. And yet, the mobile, virtual gaze is also a gaze into history, invoking cinema as a "time machine" that can always take us back, but we will always go back differently, as different women.

The utopian discourse of cyberfeminism is stimulated by a breaking down of received categories of thought, including the dualities of nature/culture, subject/object and male/female (Haraway, 1997: 482). The posthumanism of the electronic age points to the incorporation of technology into daily life, an incorporation that cinema-spectatorship was instrumental in inaugurating in its first decades. If we can imagine the flâneuse as a cyborg, we can historicize the role of women in this virtual world of urban space. Moreover, the category of the flâneuse enables us to think beyond the structures of voyeurism and visibility that have hitherto kept women as the objects of the gaze.

The recognition of the past as coming to legibility now, in a Benjaminian configuration of the lightning flash or the "waking" of the dialectical image (1999: 461), is a fundamentally different historiography than that evoked by a critic such as Jean Baudrillard, who argues that after the linearity of modernist "progress", sometime in the 1980s, history took a turn in another direction: "In our non-Euclidian space of the end of the century, a malevolent curvature invincibly reroutes all trajectories... Every noticeable movement of history brings us imperceptibly closer to its antipode, indeed to its point of departure" (Baudrillard, 1999). The multiple international celebrations of the centenary of cinema do indeed seem to qualify as what Baudrillard describes as "a misdirected or misfired labour of mourning that wants to review, re-write, restore and facelift everything." He wonders whether "the movement of modernity is reversible, and is the reversibility, in turn irreversible? How far can this retrospective activity, this dream of the end of the millennium go?"

I would respond that the parallax historiography of early and late cinema does not simply involve a rewriting or reversibility of history. Instead, it conceives of history as a panorama that shifts according to the gaze of the observer. Other gazes besides those of the flâneuse have been projected onto early cinema. Fatimah Tobing Rony, for example, has cast what she calls a "third eye" on early ethnographic experiments in racial representation (1996). If

Baudrillard advocates an "alternative temporal orbit" that would "take an elliptic short-cut and go beyond the end by not allowing it to take place," this is precisely the effect of parallax film historiography. The new modes of spectatorship that have been "discovered" in early cinema have not yet actually been experienced. The flâneuse did not exist, because she could not be recognized within the construction of the modernist gaze. Now that we know who she is, we can go on to locate her in the new media of the twenty-first century. The institutional form of classical cinema is potentially disappearing along with the analog technologies that held spectatorship in place. Thus, the parallax historiography of early and late cinema is a fundamentally utopian feminist projection within the postmodern public sphere.

Benjamin's dialectical historiography has itself come into perspective at the end of the century, as his observations on the phantasmagoria of consumer culture seem to have increasing relevance to the expanding technologies of commerce and communications. At the same time, his warnings about the "aestheticization of politics" need to be heeded in a climate of increasing consolidation of media ownership. What redemptive effect of electronic imaging can be harnessed for resistence to the power formations of new technologies? I would locate the redemptive effect in the revisioning potential of the expanded archive, which, among other things, enables us to dismantle the monolith of "classical cinema" into a heterogeneity of fragments. The bodies of stars, the textures of landscapes and cityscapes, and the vocabularies of fashion and objects, take on new referential and evidential (documentary) value in the dismantling of narrative space that is enabled by the digitization of cinema. Since the dismantling of apparatus theory, new methods of film analysis that re-view cinema as the site of cultural performance have revitalized feminist film scholarship in important ways (Bruzzi, 1997; Berry, 2000; Robertson, 1996).

The transformation of classical cinema into a cultural museum is a function of architectures of reception that Paul Virilio argues have in fact been in place since cinema's inception: "Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the classical depth of field has been revitalized by the depth of time of advanced technologies" (1997: 389). Virilio's claim that with the Lumieres' first projections, "the screen abruptly became the city square, the crossroads of all mass media" (389), is, of course, an observation that can only be made from the perspective of the end of the twentieth century. And yet, once we overcome the duality of classical cinema and its "others" of pre-classical and post-classical cinemas, we are better able to understand the role of cinema in the twentieth century as a continuously evolving site of public negotiation of the appearances and values of social life.

Parallax historiography entails a wholesale rethinking of the modernity of cinema. For feminist film historiography the eclipse of classicism enables a rereading of gender as a function of the public sphere of cinema, legible in textual discourses of excess alongside the detail of everyday life. Melodrama as it has been theorized by Thomas Elsaesser (1972) and Peter Brooks (1984) may be a means of mapping this continuous, unbroken but ever-evolving history of narrative cinema as a language of popular desires, fears and values. The modernity of melodrama, as it intersects with technologies of "mechanical reproduction" produces not a single spectator, but a plural and heterogeneous spectatorship that becomes even more fragmented through the historical distances produced in the archive. The mobility of the flâneuse as cyberfeminist is precisely a temporal mobility, produced through the archival function of digital imaging technologies.

The modernity of cinema, reconceptualized through the discourse of parallax historiography, eclipses classicism and the hold of what Benjamin described as "the novelistic" on our

discourse on cinema. Apparatus theory was premised on the identity of the viewing subject as a singular consciousness. The specificity of the cinematic apparatus insisted on a production of the subject "cut off" from social processes, in the half-light of the imaginary. "Storytelling," on the other hand, which Benjamin saw as giving way to "information" in the media culture of the twentieth century, are both forms that are grounded in the realities of social life and intercommunication (1969: 87). If he saw the information society as replacing the wisdom and counsel of storytelling, perhaps the archiving of narrative cinema constitutes a redemption of storytelling in allegorical form. Peter Brooks likewise has suggested that the modernity of melodrama lies in its relevance to the struggles of everyday life in the absence of moral absolutes (1984: 205). The parallels between early and late cinemas point to the way that the forms and institutions of moving pictures are deeply implicated in social space. As we have seen, the public sphere of cinema, since its origins in the metropolis, was specifically gendered, populated and marked by the feminine. The modernity of cinema is thus the extent to which it has always been, and continues to be, the expression of a "new society" in which gender roles, chief among social relations, are endowed with continuously evolving forms, textures and moral values. For feminist film historiography, this constitutes a re-claiming of all cinema as women's cinema, a "breaking out of the cave" (as Bruno puts it, 1993: 56), and an inscription of the body into the modernity of cinema's public sphere.

Cinema may not be "over," and yet as it becomes increasingly enmeshed with video and digital technologies, its autonomy may well be giving way. Parallax historiography encourages us to rethink film history in terms of the different forms of spectatorship engendered by the spatial and social inscriptions of visual culture in everyday life. Late cinema is modelled on the notion of archival cinema, in which film is remade electronically and viewed in a diversity of architectures. Late cinema may in fact be a more useful term than postmodern cinema, because it suggests transition rather than termination, cycles rather than breaks, and designates the curious isomorphism of cinema and the twentieth century as the basis for an alternative view of cinema's modernity.

Appendix One

In a scene from the novel *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy (1997), set in India, a family drives a great distance to see *The Sound of Music* in a town called Kerala. The story is set in 1969, and this outing is a regular family ritual. Once inside the theatre, the little boy in the family is so excited by the songs that he sings along very loudly and his mother asks him to go and sing in the lobby because he's embarrassing her. He is then molested by the Refreshments Counter Man, although the boy is so entranced by the film-going experience that he hardly knows what is happening to him behind the refreshments counter. I cite this fictional example of spectatorship because it is so suggestive of how even so-called classical cinema can become the site of a complex set of relationships, activities and cultural contestations, and how it produces a public sphere that extends far beyond the text of the film itself, even if it is also very much produced by that textuality.

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