

# SCHRIKBEELDEN





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## **SCHRIKBEELDEN**

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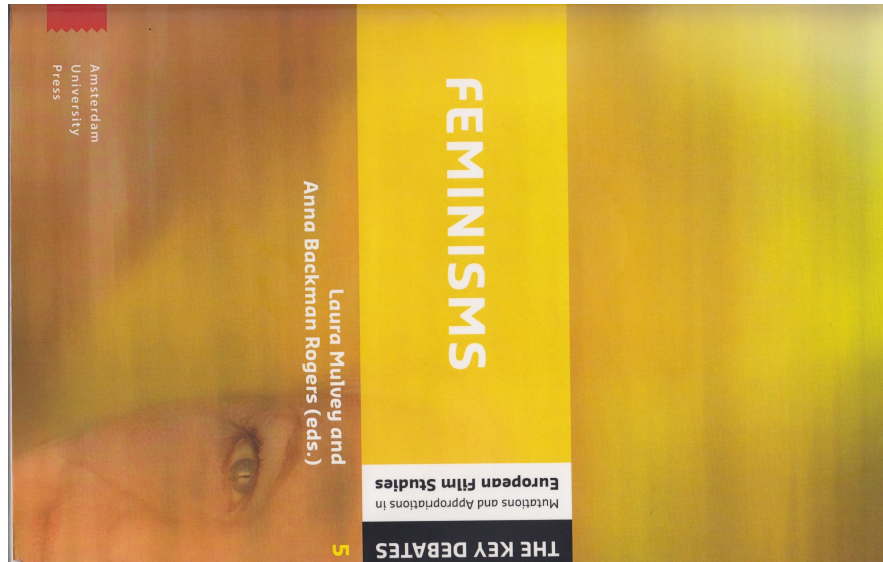
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21. SCHRIKBEELDEN

Op de omslag van het themanummer een fragment van het stilleven 'Is, was, komt' [2016] van fotograaf Dik Nicolai (c), speciaal voor dit themanummer over SCHRIKBEELDEN gemaakt (bijdrage 19).

## LAURA MULVEY'S LEGACY



### SCARY MOVIE-SCHOLARS?!

[Heidi de Mare](#)

**Review of Laura Mulvey and Anna Backman Rogers (eds.),  
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Film Cultures, ISBN 9789089646767, 275 pages, no images, € 39,95  
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And I have tried to recapitulate the way that, at the time, feminist “1970s theory” provided an instrument for the analysis of images of woman under patriarchal society in which femininity and sexuality were displaced and distorted misogynistically, Laura Mulvey, ‘Introduction’ [2015: 25].

### Introduction \*

It is now some thirty years ago that I read Laura Mulvey’s ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ for the first time, ten years after its publication in 1975.<sup>1</sup> As a Dutch feminist, educated in Art & Architectural history and Film studies, I was intrigued by her propositions. Looking back, I realize that two of her statements have been – and still are – guidelines in my research: her well-known phrase “Woman as Image, Man as Bearer of the Look”,<sup>2</sup> as well as her remark on Renaissance perspective as the origin of Hollywood cinema as a patriarchal representation system. Consequently I was curious to know more about both statements. Therefore, since 1985, I have been analysing the moving image – film as well as television drama – trying to understand how it is organized in audio-visual terms, and what this means for the fictional characters in relation to the narrative. At the same time, I dedicated my dissertation to understanding the changing role of the image in early modern European art, architecture and science.<sup>3</sup> As it turned out, both visual domains, though historically separated by several centuries, are related. But not in the way Mulvey suggested in 1975 and many of her followers believed.<sup>4</sup>

The latter, i.e. the fact that her arguments were broadly accepted in feminist film theory can be explained by the fact that Mulvey’s logic in ‘Visual Pleasure’ was as simple as it was effective because of her political use of impressive psychoanalytic terms. As early as 1986, I have been arguing – in ‘Laura Mulvey’s eendimensionale systeem. Bij dezen dan voor het laatst “Visual Pleasure”’<sup>5</sup> – that Mulvey’s

explanation is one-dimensional and ahistorical.<sup>6</sup> This combination was politically fruitful in the early days of academic feminism. Although not meant to be academic, as Mulvey underlines today,<sup>7</sup> her ideas have become basic in film studies. Moreover, Cultural, Media and Visual studies take Mulvey's propositions as an indisputable truth.<sup>8</sup> While in the last decades I found references to her statements everywhere, often in domains that have nothing to do with film or visual culture.<sup>9</sup> The publication of the volume *Feminisms – Diversity, Difference, and Multiplicity in Contemporary Film Cultures*, edited by Laura Mulvey and Anna Backman Rogers, made me curious. I wondered to what extent forty years later her arguments have been digested, reproduced and adjusted or criticized within (feminist) film studies.

### **I. What is the volume's ambition?**

The volume, containing seventeen contributions, is divided in five sections: **I.** New Perspectives: Images and the Female Body, **II.** Theory in Contemporary Contexts, **III.** History and Practice, **IV.** Contextualizing History: New Frontiers in Feminist Journals and **V.** Discussions: Dialoguing Difference and Extremity in Contemporary Cinemas. Descriptions that are, for me at least, not very helpful of what to expect in each section. Some contributions seem promising such as perspectives on Eye tracking<sup>10</sup>; the importance of affect in terms of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology<sup>11</sup>; the interest in the role of sound<sup>12</sup>; the impossibility of representing pain in (visual) language<sup>13</sup>; the coming of new visual artefacts; addressing games as well as the internet and new audiences<sup>14</sup>; and, finally, the role of biology.<sup>15</sup> Issues that indeed may challenge the dominance of psychoanalysis, semiotics and Marxism within feminist film theory. These new perspectives pose opportunities to reformulate Mulvey's one-dimensional system in a critical and fundamental way. Unfortunately, this is not what happens in this book. Firstly, because

authors are foremost in dialogue with their own peers i.e. well-known feminist film authors from the 70s and 80s, like Mary Ann Doane, Annette Kuhn, Patricia Mellencamp, Tania Modleski, Maureen Turim, Kaja Silverman, Vivian Sobchack and others, as well as young, still unknown, feminist followers who write about cinema. Secondly, because authors who discussed these new intriguing issues, thus opening up new perspectives in film studies in a substantial way, are not involved more thoroughly. Some of them are only mentioned in a symbolic way, like Carl Plantinga or Ed Tan (both interested in cognition and emotion), others are completely absent, like S. Brent Plate (on Merleau-Ponty, film and religion), or John Gibbs and Douglas Pye (who years back criticized the political-theoretical bias in feminist, Marxist, postcolonial, psychoanalytic, semiotic film studies). And why not discuss Bill Nichols or Susan Sontag on the (im)possibility to represent pain in the (moving) image?<sup>16</sup>

Based on the choices made a probable answer is that only those 'new perspectives' are included that can be used to *confirm anew* the basics of feminist politics.<sup>17</sup> For instance, as Veronica Pravadelli underlines, "*The issue of identity politics has been a key element in women's cinema.*" [150]. Given this context, *Eye tracking* can be used to technically prove the repressing 'male gaze'. Similarly, *affect* can be used as a term to upgrade the *female* spectator, *sound* as an anti-visual aspect to give *black women* their own cinematic identity as modern subjects, *pain* in connection with "the silent suffering that haunts *motherhood* [my italics]".<sup>18</sup> *Biology*, finally, turns out to have been misused by Hollywood, the "(capitalist) fetish machine" [61], using slick film techniques to culturally and socially construct the female nature [59-60].<sup>19</sup> So instead of being in touch with inspiring developments elsewhere in academia, it seems that the promising references are only a superficial face-lift to confirm

once again old ideas about the patriarchal and capitalist power relations that still determine the inequality between men and women in modernity, especially as represented on screen.<sup>20</sup> In the words of William Brown, the only male author in this volume, “... the ongoing need for the propagation of feminist ideas precisely because little (‘nothing’, his words) has changed in terms of patriarchal nature of the society in which we live.” [56]. The Internet, for example, for him is only ‘a marker of the intensification of a patriarchal and neoliberal system rather than a challenge to it – in terms of the production, circulation, and reception of images, especially images of women.’ [57].

## II. A catalogue of female issues

Given this frame of mind, it comes as no surprise that the focus in this volume is primarily on “*production, circulation, and reception of images of women*” [12, my italics]: female characters, female spectators, independent female directors, female actors, female experiences, female magazines, and female audience.<sup>21</sup> When discussing, for instance, new female characters, such as Sara Lund [THE KILLING, 2007-2012] and Saga Norén [THE BRIDGE, since 2011], the book criticizes their features in terms of “gender politics and subjectivities, representations and power” [30].<sup>22</sup> Their psychological complexity, borderline characteristics, as well as their autistic and dysfunctional behaviour are interpreted as evidence of how these women “are embedded deeply into the very representational fabric” [30]. And a little bit further, “These women are shaped within a grammar of struggle involving internal social hierarchies with new claims for recognition profoundly shaped by accelerated globalization and the hegemony of neoliberalism” [31]. Concluding that ‘these *women* make visible how modern society itself remains *gender-perverse*’ [43, my italics]. A rather one-sided, biased conclusion, given the many male characters that answer the

same features. Sherlock Holmes [ELEMENTARY, 2012-present] is also autistic, incapable of personal intimacy and addicted to his detective work. The same goes for the unconventional and blunt behaviour of Patrick Jane [THE MENTALIST, 2008-2015]. This is a logical mistake, in the sense that a particular behaviour, necessary for the plot to unroll, is by mistake seen as an essential *female* characteristic. Comparative analysis could have prevented this rather naïve conclusion.<sup>23</sup> The scholarly necessity to do so is only relevant if you are interested in such a comparison, which, unfortunately, is not the case:

It would be wrong to say that men do not suffer at the hands of serial killers, but it is the “gender-specific” trauma exacted on the female body that is of significance here. It is the rapists, murderers, and social psychopaths that habitually split the world according to sex and inflict a particularly disfiguring type of gendered power on the female body’ [36].

A second example, on feminist pornography, confirms that priority is given to philosophizing about this – indeed intriguing – dossier, striving for consent based on political ideas and theoretical notions, and not so much in developing a visually interesting pornographic praxis. In the words of Ingrid Ryberg:

... feminist pornography is defined less by specific content or style and more by the ways in which it is based on a political critique of and challenge to dominant notions of gender and sexuality and aims to empower women sexuality. Therefore, feminist pornography can be productively discussed as an interpretative community in which meaning originates not formally from a text or individual reader but is shaped by the context within which the text is written and read [82].

Most remarkable, however, is the change in the subject / object of interest. New, modern identities appear, defined through as well as

reduced to their sexual preference – the lesbian, the queer, the trans – or to their ethnicity – the black woman. All claim the victim status that before was the privilege of the modern “white and heterosexual” [18] feminist. The same arguments of oppression and exclusion are used, and multiplied in such a way that the differences are magnified: the proliferation takes place in terms of gender (and to a lesser extent race and class), claiming to be essential, marking and underlining the for ever unbridgeable gap between men and women. In other words, *Feminisms* is an easy variation on and an uncritical confirmation of Mulvey’s 1975-view in which biological difference = psychic contrast = visual distinction = social dissimilarity. Again, all aspects in life are brought under the reign of feminist politics as common denominator.

### III. Political framing and its consequences

This framing is successful, i.e. the so-called critical vocabulary permeates the chapters in such a way that a more discerning approach is no longer possible. The discourse presented in this volume is overloaded with political terms that, in every sentence, every paragraph, every chapter, remind the reader what is at issue: to prove, through cinema, that patriarchy and capitalism are still in reign, a perverse tyranny whose only aim is to suppress women, their sexuality and thus deny their female identity. Cinema is seen as a powerful producer of commercially useful sexist stereotypes, within “the capitalist structures that often feed misogyny”[145]. Impressive academic-like jargon is poured out, but turns out to be vague, and fact free gibberish. In this sense, Mulvey’s format – a populist mix of feminist politics with pseudo-theoretical terms – has been replicated, completed and naturalised as a way to communicate in this field. Using this vocabulary is the perfect way to become a member of this citation community.

The consequences of this mind-set are far-reaching. For instance, the tone in this volume is rather aggressive, given the massive accusation against men in general, with patriarchy as its incontestable symbol. A similar resonance of violent desire can be noticed in the approving description by Martine Beugnet of Breillat’s *ROMANCE X*:

thanks to parallel editing (birth is compared with the explosion of the flat where the father of the newborn baby stays) and the documentary close-up shot (of the baby being born), the ending clearly associates birth with a moment of pure abjection, as an example of the feminine’s power to blast asunder the familiar systems of meaning [193-4].

The most intriguing aspect of this volume on film is the paradox formulated by Laura Mulvey in her introduction, discussing the Iranian cinema since 1979. On the one hand the Iranian movie is welcomed because the Islamic Republic rejected mainstream Hollywood cinema which was standard practice during the era of the Persian Shah. This offered a great opportunity for female directors, in such a way that “the national cinema” of the Islamic Republic can be identified as a “woman’s cinema” [24].<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, there still is, of course, the problem of Islam, including the social implication of veiling, also on screen. In the discussion that follows, this paradox is solved, in such a way, that a positive interpretation prevails. Hollywood, as symbol of Western “male gaze”, “glamour”, “excess” “voyeurism”, using women as “sexual fetishes” and “erotic” objects is contrasted with Iranian cinema that is, instead, more “modest”, the camera keeping “distance from its profilmic figures”, offering “veiled, ordinary women” to participate “legitimately and forcefully” in “public space”, such as “cinema”.



Whereas Hollywood is accused in terms of its “cultural imperialism, commercial aesthetic”, “cultural and economic colonialisms”, the tone and choice of words in case of Iranian cinema is less harsh and more cautious. The developments are described in terms of precarious growth, “considerations” and “dialogue”, raising very different aesthetic questions that resulted in an “independent cinema”. This new kind of film is welcomed because of its “purified aesthetic”, developing a “new visual grammar” and “visual minimalism” that “opened up to the everyday lives and problems of the poor” [23-24].

The fact that a few pages earlier, “the massive rise of religion of all kinds”, in combination with “the economic poverty and precariousness of neoliberalism, [and] the loss of social aspiration” are presented as causes of modern oppression that make the position of women ‘newly vulnerable’ [20], is easily put aside. Although Iran as an Islamic Republic “replicates the dominant-subordinate relations of power between men and women”, the growth of independent [indie] women’s-cinema, with women as “professional directors” is the decisive factor here, even if they are forced to the veil, in social life as well as on the screen [24-25].<sup>25</sup> This “sketchy juxtaposition” between the cinema of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Hollywood “is intended to draw attention to the difficulty women pose for patriarchal society” [25]. An utterance by Jenny Chamarette, who discusses an Iranian film for women (by women), points in the same direction, by claiming that this film, because of the questions it poses, “becomes feminist, because feminism shares with postcolonial discourses of race, ethnicity, and hybridity an ethical attentiveness to issues of collectivity and issues of difference.” [129]

The paradox in this reasoning is that religion is both reviled (in general, in terms of patriarchy) and praised (Islam as a liberating force to eliminate the male gaze). To deactivate the danger of this reasoning, namely that attacking western visual culture from an Islamic point of view (including the veiled woman to prevent the male gaze) is helpful, a mysterious theory-like mantra is presented: “Once women can claim a critical voice the status of ‘woman’ as ‘signifier’ is necessarily challenged and modified” [25]. This so called ‘paradox’ may be called silly and naïf in terms of scholarly research, if it was not so abundantly clear political, ahistorical and dangerous at the same time.

#### IV. Blindness as goal in feminist [film] studies.

As a consequence of this reasoning, it is not surprising that film as a research object is treated rather secondarily in most of the chapters: retelling the film (instead of analysing story and plot), discussing a scene now and then to illustrate an allegation, is of course useful given the aim of *feminist film theory*, but has little to do with empirical facts of *film analysis*. The diversity and the number of analytical film-terms is, unsurprisingly, rather small compared to the excess and overload of political and pseudo-scholarly terminology. Apart from a few references to audio-visual aspects, the volume as a whole can basically make its point without film – it is enough to know that Hollywood cinema is commercial and wrong whereas independent female cinema is OK. Two randomly chosen quotations to illustrate this, by Veronica Pravadelli respectively Martine Beugnet:



Hollywood sold fantasy, avoided controversial subjects, used stars, and resorted to genres, while indies thrived on realism, embraced contentious issues, used unknowns or nonfactors, and expressed personal visions. [149]. In a negation of the woman's body as object of the look and its sexualization in all the multivalent forms of patriarchal culture, feminist experimental film tended to adopt a minimalist aesthetic, very often in combination with the theoretical or essayistic. [187]

The fact that images are missing all together in this volume is not so much a technical or financial issue. In my view, there is a more fundamental issue at stake in neglecting the visual. This volume seems to be a plea to erase the image [i. e. the visual aspects of cinema] in general. The visual is suspicious, as are all (moving) images. Given the "gaze", every image can be a threat, in principle, so iconoclasm would be the best option, if we take Martine Beugnet's ideas serious:

To put it simplistically, the way the optic relies on isolating the object of the gaze from its surroundings and on maintaining a distance between a seemingly omniscient viewing subject and the object of his/ her gaze resonates with the capitalist mode of instrumentalization of desire and of vision as consumption. [195]<sup>26</sup>

## V. Marching on – or making a difference?

At first glance interesting new perspectives and odd ideas, ripe and green, are intermingled throughout the book. A meticulous view, however, shows that this volume is an example of how to pretend a new wave within film studies, without doing so. In contrast, without any substantial film analysis, it is an outstanding example of the fact-free studies that have been promoted within the humanities for the last decades, especially in the heterogeneous and undisciplined field of the so-called cultural and visual culture studies. Instead of celebrating this volume as the best of the best, it is rather a

showcase of arrogant laziness, or worse, an example of intellectual incapability and lack of self-criticism. This volume is, unfortunately, the product of forty years of "criticism" that is narrow-minded, and inwardly looking.

The fact that this volume is dominated by Anglophone discourse – authors primarily originate from Great Britain [8], the USA [5], and Sweden [3], may be part of the problem. Moreover, most of the female authors hold high academic positions, often in film studies. Perhaps Jenny Chamarette's explanation of the patriarchal oppression of differences, throwing out automatically all unwelcome approaches, is also true when trying to understand the homogeneity of this academic "feminist" elite:

I am not speaking about tolerating difference, or assimilating difference, but acknowledging that within any given community, and particularly communities of scholars, the operations of power emerge quickly and the traces of that power obliterate difference just as quickly. Any sense of collective endeavor, any use of the term "we" also runs the concomitant risk of silencing, eliding, and ignoring difference. [136]

Instead of doing their jobs, taking care off their core business and responsibly educate the next generation, they produce a litany of self-pity.<sup>27</sup> Instead, their concern is focused on the destruction of the free culture in which they flourished, in which they had the opportunity, as women, to become academic professors and in which they could think whatever they wanted. You may wonder how it was possible that western culture accepted these home grown "academics" whose main aim is to undermine the giants upon which they stand, in the name of female vulnerability. In fact, we are confronted with a cleansing-everything-in-culture-that-might-be-hurtful-to-someone puritanism.<sup>28</sup>

The chapters propagate fear, anxiety and distrust against shared communities, human collectiveness, universal hope for empathy, and western history and culture in general.

It could, therefore, be refreshing to get acquainted with film studies outside the Anglophone territories. Annie van den Oever, one of the Series Editors of the *Key Debates*-series in which *Feminisms* was published, is in a perfect position to do so, given her involvement with, for instance, the discussions in *Versus* (a Dutch magazine devoted to film and performance, 1982-1992), and the quite different *film* analyses that have been written since. Taking these Dutch publications seriously would be a nice start to redeem the editorial promise at the start of *Feminisms*: “The original aim of *Key Debates* series was to revisit the concepts and indeed controversies that have shaped the field of film studies.” And, with Laura Mulvey’s seminal essay “Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema” in mind, it “seems highly appropriate that this second phase of the *Key Debates* series should start with a volume that takes stock of how nearly a century of debate has surrounded and continues to link concepts of feminism and film theory.” [9]. Only by taking debates outside the Anglophone territories into account, the claim that feminist film theory is “open to the diversity of thought and practice” [15] will gain credibility.

Meticulous research asks for a different approach, that of diligence, perseverance and self-criticism. This means accepting that there is no determinism in biology, in social position, in ways of seeing, certainly not in Western culture.<sup>29</sup> People do have a choice. To study the moving image as a cultural phenomenon in a systematic way, to analyse fiction and characters, stories and plots is these days more of a necessity than ever. With ISIS/Daesh and other terrorist groups undermining Western freedom of speech and imagination,

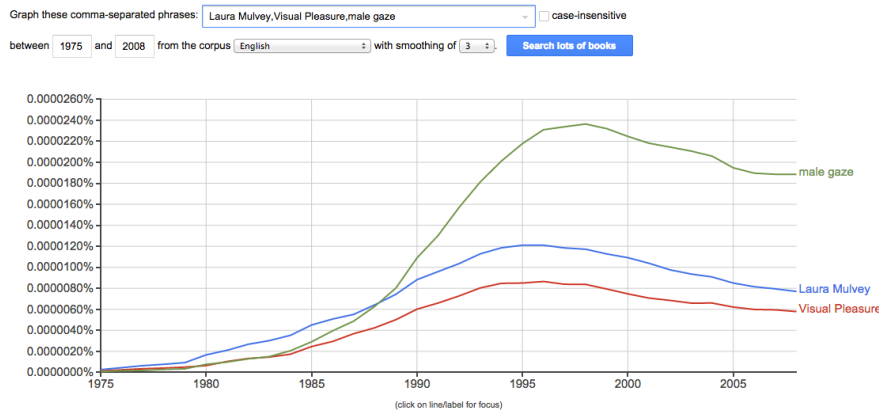
with a tsunami of violent visual propaganda striving to destroy western culture it is necessary to do our jobs in a disciplined way.

Instead of demanding of cinema to give a correct representation of women and to be as realistic as possible,<sup>30</sup> it is more fruitful to study (Hollywood) film as a “modern mythology” in which collective values are presented<sup>31</sup> or in terms of the “public imagination” and “the common good”.<sup>32</sup> Why not turn to the analytical work of Claire Johnston, who in the seventies argued, that female stereotypes in film should not be understood as (false) representations of reality (the so-called inferior position of women in society),<sup>33</sup> but to understand the reality and the role of the mythological stories of which they are part.<sup>34</sup> Why not reread Johnston’s analyses with the more recent publications by anthropologists like Reini Raatgever and Wendy Doniger on mythology in mind?<sup>35</sup> The only chapter that presents a glimpse of what might be more important to understand in human life, is the chapter about existential questions, like aging and Alzheimer disease.<sup>36</sup> Fundamental insight in the story-world, in the values that are collectively imagined, is the only way to go beyond destructive and discriminating “identity-politics”. It is a good start to appreciate the idea of a *common interest* – notwithstanding all the differences between human beings.<sup>37</sup> To conclude my comments on Mulvey’s legacy – now indeed for the very, very last time – I will close with a quote that provokes reflection on the necessarily fictive status of the “common good”. The sentence was formulated in 1997 by Willem Witteveen. He was a lawyer and a senator, as well as former chairman of our Foundation, and he was, with his wife and daughter and many others, killed on July 17<sup>th</sup> 2014, in the MH17-attack above Ukraine.

Who, without reference to a coherent and complete concept of common interest, in which all values are in place, nevertheless strives to act politically in a way that majority and minority rights are done justice to, must assume a fictitious public interest. If the (fictitious) interest did not exist, it would have to be invented.<sup>38</sup>

**Framing** in Laura Mulvey & Anna Backman Rogers [eds.], *Feminisms. Diversity, Difference, and Multiplicity in Contemporary Film Cultures*. The Key Debates. Mutations and Appropriations in European Film Studies [Amsterdam University Press 2015].

### Google Books Ngram Viewer



### ‘CRITICAL VOCABULARY’

activism, aesthetics [black, feminist, lesbian, queer, visceral], affect, audience [black, white], avant-gardism, black [identity, modernity, speech, voices], body, bourgeois, capitalism [the murky belly of global], cinema [intercultural, of transgression, of the senses], class, colonialism, commercial, consumer [society, culture], corporeality, corporeal cinema, crisis, critical [discourse, language, re-orientation, scholarship, theory, vocabulary], cultural [construction, matrix, phenomenon, symbol], deconstruction, digital, economics, female [subjectivity, viewers], feminine [realm, sensibility], feminist [aesthetics, philosophies of the image, scholarship], fetish/fetishism [being, culture, fashion, machine, process,

culture, object], **gaze [male]**, gender, hybrid, ideology, image [consumption], lesbian, male [subjective consciousness, dominated cinema, essentialist paradigm for perception, psyche], Marxism, masculine, [pleasures, sexuality], masochistic, meaning, modernity, narcissism, neo-liberalism, patriarchal [culture, framework, ideals, representations, society, unconscious], non-[colonial, Euro-American women, organic, privileged, white], object, pleasure, political [aesthetics, critique, modernism, potential, power], politics [androcentric, gender, sexual], power, psychoanalysis, queer, post-[colonial, feminism, human, modernism, structuralism], race, realism, representation, sadist, scopophilia [techno-], semiotics, sexism, signifier, stereotype, subject, trans-[feminist cinema, masculine, media, national, visibility], transgressive, viewer, vision, visibility [haptic], voyeurism, white, woman, women.

### WOMAN, FEMALE, FEMININITY: primarily NEGATIVE ASSOCIATIONS

abject, abjection, abused, alienation, angst, awesome, awful encounters, brutality, compromised, contempt, corporeal disintegration, crisis, darkness, death, deferred, dehumanised, denied, dirt, disappointment, disconnect, disembodied nature of the digital, disfigured, disgust, disrupted, distress, dystopian, exile, existential horror, exploitation, fear, filthy incarnations, forgotten, horrific, horrified, horror, hypocrisy, illness, injustice, intense uncomfortable, isolated, lonely, madness, mess, [mis]interpretation, [mis]representation, misogyny, mistrust, mutilating herself, objective world, paralyzed, pornography, reduction of the female body to an object of medical investigation, regret, repressed, silenced, subjective body, suffer, threat, unable to communicate, uncanny worlds, unseen, violence, violence, violence, vulnerability, vulnerable, wounded female body.

### FILM ANALYSIS – some seldom used TERMS

camerawork, cinematic apparatus, cinematic construction [of gender, image, performance, philosophy, space], cinematographic language, close up, diegetic, extra diegetic, genre, imaginative world, mise-en-cadre, mise-en-scène, narration, plot, sequence, shot, shot-reverse-shot, voice-over.

\*In want to thank Connie Veugen for her critical reading of the first outline.

<sup>1</sup> In: *Screen*, vol. 16, nr. 3 [1975]: 6-18. References to Mulvey c.s. 2015 will be noted in [brackets].

<sup>2</sup> Mulvey 1975: 11.

<sup>3</sup> [2003](#), [2003-summary](#), [2012a](#) and my review of H. Bredekamp et al. (eds.), *The Technical Image. A History of Styles in Scientific Imagery* [Chicago University Press, 2015], in: *The Journal of Design History*, Oxford University Press [2016a].

<sup>4</sup> Mulvey admits this herself [197]: “In fact, I never quite understood why the ‘Italian Renaissance’ with its fascinating tensions between religious iconography and fragmented observation of the natural world has been so denounced – going right back to the old days of *Screen*!”

<sup>5</sup> See article 12 in this IVMV volume 3 | 2015, with an English translation of this publication.

<sup>6</sup> The [German translation](#) of this article [[1986a](#)] was available since the eighties; articles dating from [1985](#) and [1986b](#) are part of this analysis of feminist film theory. In [1989](#), I analyzed the sequences with Lauren Bacall and Marilyn Monroe, mentioned in her 1975 article.

<sup>7</sup> [17]: “It is sometimes forgotten that the cultural context that produced the theoretical essays and the experimental films [in the seventies], often themselves experimenting with theory, was not academic. And there has always been an uneasy mismatch between the polemical and insistently radical work of the time, certainly not intended for a student audience, and its rather too abrupt adoption into ‘film studies’ once they ultimately arrived in the academy.”

<sup>8</sup> See for instance my publications in [2009](#), [2010](#), [2013a](#), [2014a](#).

<sup>9</sup>. [2013b](#).

<sup>10</sup> W. Brown, ‘Destroy Visual Pleasure: Cinema, Attention, and the Digital Female Body (Or, Angelina Jolie Is a Cyborg)’: 57-58.

<sup>11</sup> A. Koivunen, ‘The Promise of Touch: Turns to Affect in Feminist Film Theory’: 98.

<sup>12</sup> G. Ramanathan, ‘Sound and Feminist Modernity in Black Women’s Film Narratives’.

<sup>13</sup> L. Mulvey, ‘Introduction: 1970s Feminist Film Theory and the Obsolescent Object’: 25.

<sup>14</sup> L. Torchin, ‘Conditions of Activism: Feminist Film Activism and the Legacy of the Second Wave’.

<sup>15</sup> W. Brown op.cit.: 59-60.

<sup>16</sup> E. Tan, 'Three Views of Facial Expression and Its Understanding in the Cinema', in: J.D. Anderson & B. Fisher Anderson (eds.), *Moving Image Theory. Ecological Considerations* (Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale 2005) 107-127; C. Plantinga, *Moving Viewers. American film and the spectator's experience* (University of California Press, Berkeley/ Los Angeles/ London 2009); S. B. Plate, *Religion and Film. Cinema and the re-creation of the world* (Wallflower, London/ New York, 2008); J. Gibbs & D. Pye (eds.), *Close-up 3*, 'Editors' introduction': vii (Wallflower, London/ New York, 2009); B. Nichols, *Representing reality. Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1991); S. Sontag, *Regarding the pain of others* (Penguin Books Ltd, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> "Thus questions of cinema, initially at least, were above all questions of politics." [21], and still are.

<sup>18</sup> Although the issue is about Iran, in which "mothers are both idealized but also heavily oppressed by their lack of legal rights", it is used as an argument more in general: "the filmmaker as a woman challenges male cultural domination by making films in a cinema dominated by male directors both globally and historically. At the same time, she challenges the one-dimensional and idealized image of motherhood, opening it out to infinite emotional complexity." [25].

<sup>19</sup> The remark by queer videomaker Hito Steyerl (in: *For an Imperfect Cinema*) approvingly cited by Sophie Meyer [88], is also instructive: "...perfect cinema – technically and artistically masterful – is most always reactionary cinema.' The imperfect cinema is one that strives to overcome the divisions of labor within class society."

<sup>20</sup> "Modernity" is a term that is never explained, although a massive literature exists. See for an overview G.J.M. van den Brink (ed.), *Moral Sentiments in Modern Society* (AUP & The Chicago Press, forthcoming).

<sup>21</sup> It is embarrassing to see that the only male author, William Brown, is even more convinced of feminist politics, given the way he repeats the ideological condemnation of men [54-57], and to conclude with the well know mantra: "Men still dominate the film industry, and numerous films are still made in which women are just to be looked at (...), whether or not a woman takes on such a role by 'choice' "[57].

<sup>22</sup> J. McCabe, 'Disconnected Heroines, Icy Intelligence: Reframing Feminism(s) and Feminist Identities at the Borders Involving the Isolated Female TV Detective in Scandinavian-Noir': 29-43.

<sup>23</sup> For an illustrative example of such a logical error, see Patricia Mellencamp, 'Situation-comedy, feminism and Freud' who by mistake takes characteristics of the *comedy* as indications of *female* comedians. See my review in [1987](#).

<sup>24</sup> Negar Mottahedeh, who discusses this paradox, is quoted by Mulvey [24], from Hamid Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 4* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012: 9).

<sup>25</sup> Mulvey [24] refers to Hamid Naficy, op.cit. 172.

<sup>26</sup> It seems as if there is no knowledge what so ever about the importance of optics for everything in modern life: medical techniques for instance were impossible without it, as well a air trafic, computers, as well as the camera it self. See 2016a, note 3.

<sup>27</sup> And I am not the only one who addresses this problem of people who are lost in modernity, people who have everything freedom can give, and still see themselves as victims. See Bruce Bawer, *The Victims' Revolution. The Rising of Identity Studies and the Closing of the Liberal Mind* (Broadside Books, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2012), and work by Christina Hoff Sommers.

<sup>28</sup> The list is endless, as we document in this issue on SCHRIKBEELDEN [no adequate term exists in English – “images of fear” – boosted by activists who never take the time to think thoroughly about their claim – and what they destroy by claiming their personal victimhood.

<sup>29</sup> Of course I do agree that there are enough issues at stake we have to fight for – women in western culture still earn less money for the same jobs as men, women are not equally represented in organizations and at universities, and of course women, as well as children and men, will suffer in this world. So yes, activism is indeed often necessary.

<sup>30</sup> Torchin [143]: tackling “the issues of representation of women in popular culture, arguing in particular that the underrepresentation and disparaging treatment of women in power contributed to a continued absence of powerful women in the public arena.”

<sup>31</sup> See my research [h 1990a](#), [2012b](#), [2014b](#), [2015](#) and ‘Moral Imagination at Work’, with Karen Woets, in: G.J.M. van den Brink (ed.), *Moral Sentiments in Modern Society*, op cit. [2016b].

<sup>32</sup> Core business of the Dutch Foundation of Public Imagination ([stichting IVMV](#)). Aims are to promote reflection on the role of image and imagination in our society, tracing current topics in which “images” influence the public debate, stimulating public debate about the way in which “images” have impact, obtaining and executing scientific research projects in order to classify images and define the powerful role of images in the “public imagination”.

<sup>33</sup> [13] “systematically sought to deconstruct hegemonic images of the female body and identity.”

<sup>34</sup> See my articles on work by Claire Johnston in [1986c](#) and [1990b](#).

<sup>35</sup> See R. Raatgever, ‘[Cultuur, mythe, film](#). Bespiegelingen van een cultureel antropoloog’, in: *Versus* 1990/1: 51-67; W. Doniger, *The Implied Spider. Politics & Theology in Myth* (Columbia University Press, New York 1998).

<sup>36</sup> L. Bolton, ‘The Intertextual Stardom of IRIS: Winslet, Dench, Murdoch, and Alzheimer’s Disease’: 65-75.

<sup>37</sup> For instance, to reflect on a police drama like THE KILLING and the existential questions they offer, to all human beings alike, see [2013c](#).

<sup>38</sup> Willem Witteveen, ‘De nuttige fictie van het algemeen belang’, in: *Feit & Fictie. Tijdschrift voor de geschiedenis van de representatie*, 3 (1997), nr. 2: 15-34, p. 34. “Wie zonder verwijzing naar een samenhangend en totaal concept van algemeen belang, waarin alle warden hun plek hebben, toch politiek wil bedrijven die meerderheden en minderheden recht doet, zal een fictief algemeen belang moeten hanteren. Als het (fictieve) belang niet bestond, zou het moeten worden uitgevonden.”