

11-4-1996

Implications of a Feminist Narratology: Temporality, Focalization and Voice in the Films of Julie Dash, Mona Smith and Trinh T. Minh-ha

Jennifer Alyce Machiorlatti
Wayne State University,

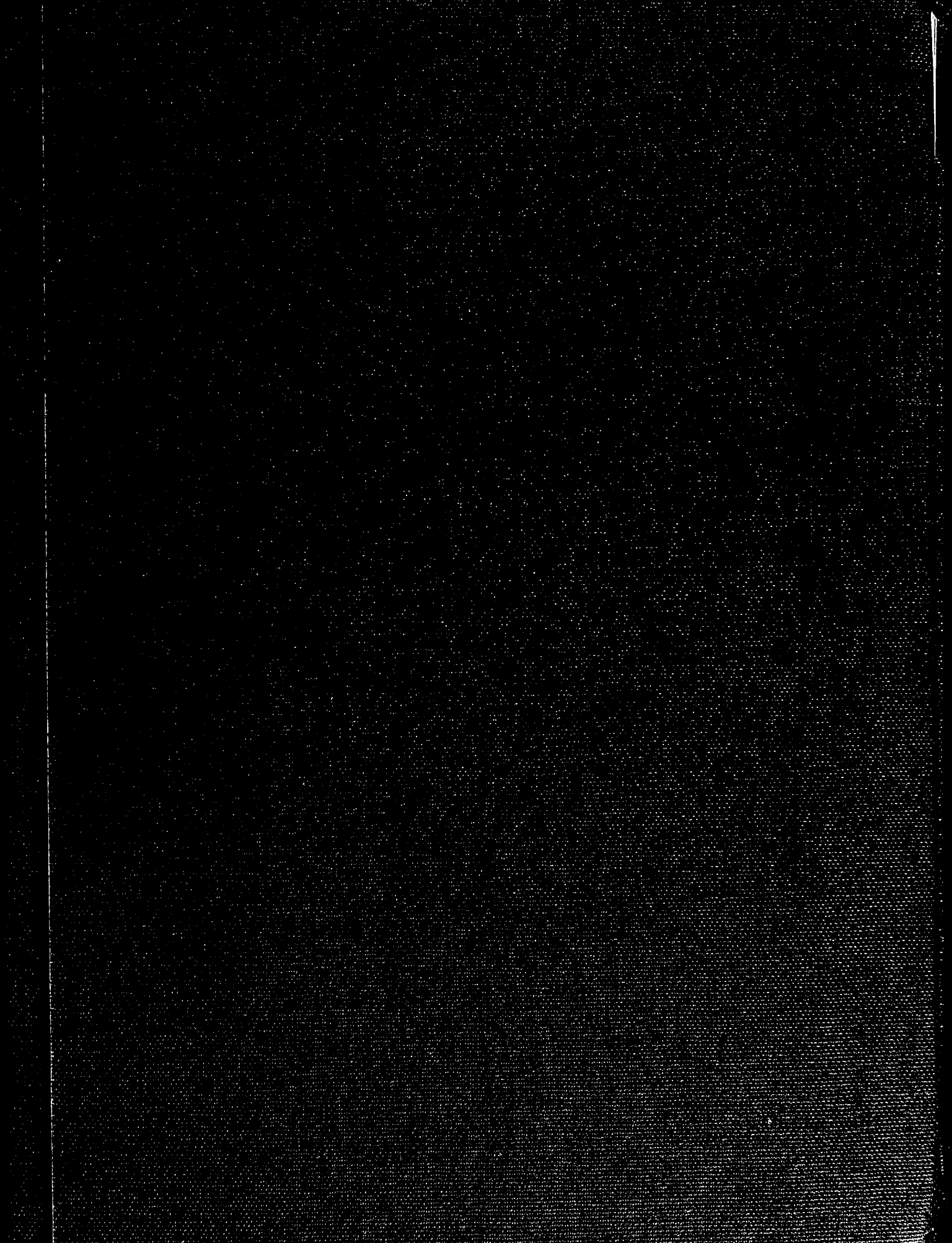
Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/oa_dissertations

 Part of the [Critical and Cultural Studies Commons](#), and the [Film and Media Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Machiorlatti, Jennifer Alyce, "Implications of a Feminist Narratology: Temporality, Focalization and Voice in the Films of Julie Dash, Mona Smith and Trinh T. Minh-ha" (1996). *Wayne State University Dissertations*. 1674.
http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/oa_dissertations/1674

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@WayneState. It has been accepted for inclusion in Wayne State University Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@WayneState.



IMPLICATIONS OF A FEMINIST NARRATOLOGY:
TEMPORALITY, FOCALIZATION AND VOICE
IN THE FILMS OF JULIE DASH, MONA SMITH AND TRINH T. MINH-HA

Volume I

by

JENNIFER ALYCE MACHIORLATTI

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1996

MAJOR: COMMUNICATION
(Radio/Television/Film)

Approved by:

Julie Dash
Co-Advisor

11/9/96
Date

Robert W. Spalding
Co-Advisor

Nov 7 - 1996
Date

Robert W. Spalding

11/4/96

Robert W. Spalding

11/4/96

© COPYRIGHT BY
JENNIFER ALYCE MACHIORLATTI
1996
All Rights Reserved

her supportive feminist perspective as well as information from the speech communication and rhetorical criticism area of inquiry. Robert Steele approached this text from a filmmaker's point of view.

I also thank Matthew Seegar for guidance in the graduate program at Wayne State University and to Mark McPhail whose limited presence in my life allowed me consider the possibilities of thinking in new ways, practicing academic activism and explore endless creative endeavors.

Special thanks to Ken Deman who provided translation of "Gender and Narratology: Categories and Perspectives of Feministic Narrative." Dr. Michelle Golden contributed careful editing and reading of the work.

Special thanks to Mary Al, James and Rudy Balber-Herman who provided their home in Minneapolis and shared the Ojibway way with me while interviewing Mona Smith, Nick Van Hoogstraten for the NYC futon, James and Lynn Denney, the Wise Woman Wisdom group for offering discussion on personal aesthetics, Clifford for sharing the feminist perspective from a man's POV, and the PM Club gang.

I thank Mona Smith for being so generous with personal information and philosophy, as well as proof reading chapter five. Thanks for calling it like it was. Julie Dash took time to read an initial draft of chapter four and offered corrections and comments. I also thank Mona for introducing me to Bennie Matias at the Center for Arts Criticism,

Minneapolis, MN, who engaged me in challenging discussion on women filmmakers and aesthetics. Also thanks to the Changing Woman Sisterhood Circle for holding space for growth and healing in the feminine traditions.

A special nod to Lisa Barley, my dissertation support partner on e-mail and in spirit. Your encouragement and thoughtfulness really facilitated this vision. Also thanks to Le Claire Taylor for your planetary interpretations and encouragement.

The support of my family was crucial in completing this work. Thank you Dad Joe, Mom Joan, and Brother-in-law David for their space of being proud of me. Special thanks to my sister Julie, who really understood the project at hand, and who bugged me endlessly to get the work done. I also acknowledge the two souls who came into this world while I was writing -- Audrey Rose and Weston David -- for your distraction and teachings on presence and fun. And to Bubba and C.K. Dexter Haven for their company.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME I

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....ii

INTRODUCTION.....1

 Statement of Purpose and Significance.....1

 Methodology.....2 *

 Challenges of Theoretical Inquiry.....3

 Organization of Chapters/Filmmakers.....8

 Notes.....20

CHAPTER 1: NARRATIVE AND GENDER IN CINEMA STUDIES.....21

 The Gender Question in Film Studies.....21

 Using Gender Difference in Narrative as.....27

 Radical Intervention

 Significance of Feminist Narrative Inquiry.....39

 Notes.....43

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND HISTORICAL.....44

 DEVELOPMENTS IN FEMINIST FILM CRITICISM

 AND THEORY

 Walking on the Path of My Sister,.....44

 But in My Own Shoes

 Feminist Film and the Critical Voice:.....62

 Seeing the Margins as Places of Power

 Feminist Criticism and Aesthetics:.....76

 Searching For and Speaking in One's Own Voice

 Feminist, Feminism, Feminine, Female, Woman,.....88

 Womanist: What Are We To Name Ourselves and Creative

 Expression?

 Notes.....113

CHAPTER 3: CINEMATIC NARRATOLOGY AND CONSIDERATION OF A FEMINISTIC PERSPECTIVE.....	117
The (Her) Story with no Beginning and No End:.....	117
Meaning in Women's Narrative	
Woman as Social Subject: The Significance.....	122
of a Feminist-Narrative Critical Methodology	
The Master's Language: Narrative as Male.....	134
Construction and Pleasure	
Considering the Master's Tools: Narratology.....	148
Up to Now and Glimpses of a Feminist Perspective	
The Implied Author: Conceptual/Collaborative.....	176
Narration and Visualizing the Female Social and Personal Self	
Notes.....	180
CHAPTER 4: FEMINIST NARRATOLOGY EXAMINED IN THE.....	183
FILMS OF JULIE DASH	
Julie Dash and the Aesthetics of a Postmodern.....	183
Griot in <u>Daughters of the Dust</u>	
Biographical Notes on Julie Dash: Black Female.....	187
Memory as Element of Change	
Film Notes: <u>Daughters of the Dust</u>	193
Film Notes: <u>Illusions</u>	198
Film Notes: <u>Four Women</u> and <u>Praise House</u>	200
The Feminist Aesthetic, Narrative Voice.....	202
and Focalization in <u>Daughters of the Dust</u>	
The Gullah Language and Historical Voice(s).....	215
The Politics of Cinematic Narration:.....	240
Speaking and Reading Between the Frames	

Temporality in Daughters of the Dust: African,.....248
 Ancestral and "Limbo" Time
 Notes.....263

VOLUME II

CHAPTER 5: DAKOTA MEANS ALLY: THE VIDEO.....266

EXPRESSIONS OF MONA SMITH

Native American Video Aesthetics:.....266
 Finding Voices and Walking the Red Road
 Biographical Notes on Mona Smith:.....277
 Leadership Through the Video Voice
 Video Notes: That Which is Between.....282
 Video Notes: Her Giveaway: A Spiritual Journey.....284
with AIDS
 Video Notes: Honored by The Moon.....285
 The Documentary Impulse in Native American.....286
 Cinema
 Narratology and the Hybrid Film/Video Form.....289
 Focalization and Voice in That Which is Between.....294
 Focalization and Voice in Honored by The Moon.....307
 and Her Giveaway: A Spiritual Journey with AIDS
 Conceptual/Collaboration Narration: Mona Smith.....309
 as Native Leader
 Implications of a Feminist Narratology in the.....311
 Work of Mona Smith
 "Indian Time" in Narratological Perspective.....313
 Notes.....315

CHAPTER 6: WITNESSING THE MISFITS OF HISTORY:.....318

IDENTITY, LANGUAGE AND THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATION IN THE

HYBRID-BOUNDARY CINEMA OF TRINH T. MINH-HA

There is no Such Thing as Documentary: The.....318
Truth of No One Truth
Biographical Notes on Trinh Minh-ha:.....330
Insider/Outsider and Insight Cinema
Film Notes: Reassemblage.....335
Film Notes: Surname Viet Given Name Nam.....337
The Conceptual/Collaborative Narrator's Voice.....348
as Focalizer in Reassemblage
Reflexive Cinematic Narration in.....358
Hybrid-Boundary Cinema
Voice and Translation in Surname Viet.....363
Given Name Nam
Conceptual/Collaborative Narrative Voice:.....373
The Documentarian and Her Subjects Construct Reality
The Narrative Construction of Truth Telling:.....377
The Documentary Interview
A Narratology of Boundaries: Conclusions on.....385
the Feminist Cinema of Trinh Minh-ha
Notes.....388
CHAPTER 7: SYNTHESIS OF FEMINIST NARRATOLOGY: OPEN.....389
ENDINGS AND EXTENSION IN THEORY
Temporality and Feminist Narrative.....394
Focalization and The Feminist Aesthetic.....398
Experience
The Voice of Feminist Aesthetics: Women.....402
Recount Their Histories
The Conceptual/Collaborative Narrator:.....407

Feminists Making Feminist Films	
Conclusions and Avenues for Future Studies in.....	408
Narrative and Gender	
Notes.....	411
APPENDIX: FILMOGRAPHIES.....	412
REFERENCES.....	415
ABSTRACT.....	435
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT.....	437

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose and Significance

Post structuralist criticism questions the universality of language structures. Cultural studies examines differences among people like class, race and gender as well as the institutional variances of politics, economics and ideology. There may be some common features among language(s) and narratives, but recognition of local knowledges, cultural and ideological differences inflects patterns of communication and textual structure. If we are to advance the study of the cinematic language, it is relevant to consider cultural differences as a primary factor in the construction of that cinematic narrative and, as well, the critical language with which we speak about it.

"Implications of A Feminist Narratology: Temporality, Focalization and Voice in the Films of Julie Dash, Mona Smith and Trinh Minh-ha" is a feministically inspired post-structural, textual analysis of films by three independent women filmmakers combining narratological and feminist methodological perspectives. According to Ansgar Nünning (1995), feminism and narratology are at first judged as incompatible because "they have little in common on the basis of their differing knowledge, interests, theoretical approaches and methodical apparatus. The knowledge interests of narratology regardless whether it is called structuralist or post structuralist[...]is primarily of a theoretical and taxomical nature" (103).¹ On the other hand, feminist film studies have concerns themselves with

historical, social, cultural and ideological elements and constructions of, and within, texts. Feminism is oriented toward an interpretive analysis rather than a taxomical, formulaic one like narratology. The ultimate goal of feminist studies has been the realization of women's roles in film and filmmaking, power structures and social relationships. By combining both a formulaic method like narratology and the interpretive, culturally focused feministic approach, we realize a productive perspective for furthering film studies through structuralism and culturalism.

Methodology

This study uses the traditional narrative concepts of temporality, focalization (point of view) and voice in select films by each filmmaker in order to locate similarities and differences in narrative structure across different texts, produced at different times and across the contextual differences of ethnicity, historical background and culture. These independent filmmakers have traditionally worked from spaces of marginality, but as bell hooks suggests, the space of marginality is a space of "radical openness" which allows for greater challenge of the master narratives that we have been forced to learn and to speak through (1989). Thus, refiguration of paradigmatic narrative models might have better results if we use a radically different perspective (texts and methods from the margins) to look within the discipline (its theoretical

center). This study also focuses on narrative -- its mythical, historical, and ideological components -- as gender specific address.

Challenges of Theoretical Inquiry

There are several challenges inherent to a study such as this one because a theoretical essay can only answer the specific questions it poses, not all the conceivable questions that may arise surrounding feminism and narratology. Does gender, in every case, suggest different forms of narrative or acts of narration? Are textual practices necessarily gendered? What about race, ethnicity, age and the myriad of othernesses present in postmodern society? All texts over time cannot possibly conform to or be explained by one structural-cultural model. Using hybridity in scholarship at first recognizes these dilemmas, and then exemplifies what cross disciplinary inquiry can lend to our knowledge base and paradigm refiguration.

To address some of the questions of developing a feminist oriented narrative theory, I have chosen films by women of color to illustrate how feminist narratological theory might work across difference. This does not mean European-American (white) women cannot also be included in such a study. The works of Lizzie Borden, Yvonne Rainer or Chantel Akerman come to mind and can also be considered in this kind of study because their work explores differences among women and/or locates women centrally within the narrative. Moreover, this pluri-methodological approach may not be the most effective way to examine films that do not

locate difference -- gender, race, or others -- as central to the narrative. A feminist narratology serves in the analysis of films which on some level question hegemonic domination through cultural and aesthetic form. It also serves to examine films by women, films with female central characters or films with women as central to the production crew. Application of this model over time and across different texts will illustrate its usefulness. Until further exploration of a feminist oriented narrative are undertaken, we cannot know its range of usefulness. Regardless of this theoretical apprehension, I assert that the application of current narrative concepts like tense, focalization and voice are not expansive enough, especially in regards to gender difference. This study demonstrates that the original terms of narratology are useful when combined with a feminist contextual perspective. This cultural-political perspective recognizes factors of difference that are inscribed into the texts thus changing the way texts can be interpreted through careful textual analysis. By combining two antithetical perspectives, we can investigate the potential usefulness in their individual and combined relations to cinema studies.

Another challenge I am faced with in conducting this study has mainly to do with the ongoing conversation in film theory and other cultural/aesthetic modes of inquiry. Narrative criticism, as other methodological perspectives in film studies, does not offer definitive answers as to how films address audiences with meaningful stories about

everyday life and in turn how those audiences engage with the texts. Critical approaches answer those questions which they are designed to answer and by the uses to which they're put by practitioners. Narratology is very specific in its textual analysis and can be used to examine different kinds of narrative structure within cinema. And the feminist perspective adds ideological and cultural inquiry to that analysis matrix. Polysemy characterizes mass-mediated communication (Fiske 1986, Newcomb 1984). Therefore, multiple meanings drawn from various analyses are not always applicable to other filmmakers and their films across time, space and historical context, although this is what narratologists seek to do. If a "scientific" method can be developed which explains narrative structure, it is generally assumed to work across texts and time. But, my understanding of narrative may not work for a critic who approaches textual criticism from a different location/perspective. Film theory works in a processual fashion, advancing knowledge by extension and reformulation. New theoretical gateways are continually revealed and accessed. Film criticism is not a science, but it can be aided through structural and descriptive language and models.

The challenges of this study also illustrate its importance. When examining issues of difference in film production and signification, the greatest contribution may be understanding that meaning/signification and the tools used to discuss that meaning need to be mobile. Reading

film from the margins allows for the dismantling of a center or "centrist" mode of critical operation. The methodology can be applied across time and space, even though the meaning generated from the analyses may vary. This is the paradoxical nature of film theory. It is not measurable nor concretely reliable, but rather it is about emerging inquiry. The potential of film theory and analytical methods exists in their ability to re-vision themselves periodically and contributes to developing ways of understanding text construction and audience reception. Film theory understands it's own arbitrariness. Theory is fluid, so it is difficult to grasp before it changes again. But if we imagine film theory along a continuum, with no beginning or end, it becomes a spiraling process of becoming. And it allows us to re-invent the way theory has been established and accepted. It also provides new ways to address film production, textual address and reception.

Another challenge of this study is the availability of films and access to these films by large audiences or individual viewers. This is a continuing problem in the realm of feminist film making and distribution. A few distributors such as Third World Newsreel and Women Make Movies provide women filmmakers access to a system still operating under the guises of a capitalist, patriarchal structure. ² Although distributors do make the films available to some groups -- community organizations, women's groups, schools -- on a reduced rental fee, the distributor has to consider its business operations. Rental fees are

such that an individual cannot afford to view the films as they do most Hollywood releases. Most of these independent films are not available via local video outlets to individual customers on a mass distribution basis.

Both of the distributors I mentioned above are non-profit organizations, suggesting that there may be no, or little, profit in women's independent film. However, non-profit organizations exist to provide education, funding, workshops, networking and access for more women and minority filmmakers. So, these distributors may operate as non-profit organizations because they prefer to see the profits realized by the filmmakers themselves. Profit eventually leads to more activity in film production. Like other marginal filmmaking practices, distribution remains a problematic area. Mainstream distributors focus on mainstream genres and storylines which perpetuate mainstream stereotypes. Marginalized filmmakers need to develop new ways of funding and distributing their works. Inexpensive video formats for production and the potential of cable television in the area of distribution may serve to increase demand for film products and provide future possibility for these stories from locations outside of dominant filmmaking to get made and distributed.

Despite the challenges of acquiring films for screening and doing feminist media research, this dissertation provides significant contribution to the field of cinema studies in several ways. The work questions and extends narrative critical analysis. Secondly, it illustrates where

feminism contributes to narratology while also continuing the theoretical conversation about feminist aesthetics. The dissertation brings the work of independent filmmakers into mainstream discussion. Thus it serves as activist criticism and theory and is an element of change in shifting critical consciousness about film studies.

Organization of Chapters/Filmmakers

Chapter one, **Narrative and Gender in Cinema Studies**, of this dissertation includes three sections: **The Gender Question in Film Studies**, **Using Gender Difference in Narrative as Radical Intervention**, and **Significance of Feminist Narrative Inquiry**. The relevance of narrative in our everyday lives, as well as its ability to construct and maintain culture and connect human beings are explored in this chapter. This section also introduces the idea of applying a feminist perspective to narrative textual analysis.

Chapter two, **Review of Literature and Historical Developments in Feminist Film Criticism and Theory**, reviews significant literature in feminist film theory and criticism which is applicable to this work. Within this chapter are four sections: **Walking on the Path of My Sister, But In My Own Shoes**; **Feminist Film and the Critical Voice: Seeing the Margins as Places of Power**; **Feminist Criticism and Aesthetics: Searching for and Speaking in One's Own Voice**; and **Feminist, Feminism, Feminine, Female, Woman, Womanist: What Are We To Name Ourselves and Creative Expression?**. This portion of the work reviews the historical background

of feminist film criticism and theory to illustrate the significant contributions which examine gender in film studies. The chapter also addresses several questions that remain to be explored in feminist film theory and criticism. This research advances theory and criticism while not posturing itself as a definitive answer or model for feminist narratology. It does however consider the act of storytelling from different women's perspectives. Feminist film theory and criticism have historically focused on gender differences alone and this study answers that problem in some ways by including women across other differences -- race, ethnicity, and film form/style. Multiple considerations of "difference" is a current project in feminist film criticism and theory.

Chapter two also reviews the work that has been written on defining and establishing a feminist aesthetic. In this section, I discuss the terms feminine, feminist and womanist, which all provide significant contributions to this study with their connotative meanings. These terms and wide ranging definitions further suggest the relevance of gender in mediated texts and visual art.

Chapter three of the dissertation titled **Cinematic Narratology and Consideration of a Feministic Perspective** provides a review of significant literature and discussion of narratology, which is the primary analytical methodology to be used in the dissertation. The chapter also suggests the need for a feminist perspective in narratology, as there are limited scholarly works in this area and as both

feminist criticism can benefit from narratology and narrative criticism and theory is forwarded by consideration of gender. Included in this chapter are **The (Her) Story with no Beginning and No End: Meaning in Women's Narrative; Woman as Social Subject: The Significance of a Feminist-Narrative Critical Methodology; The Master's Language: Narrative as Male Construction and Pleasure; Considering The Master's Tools: Narratology Up to Now and Glimpses of a Feminist Perspective; and The Implied Author: Conceptual/Collaborative Narration and Visualizing the Female Social and Personal Self.**

The actual terminology "feminist narratology" has been used by a few authors, including literary critics Susan Lanser in "Toward a Feminist Narratology" (1986) and by Nilli Diengott in "Narratology and Feminism" (1988), a rebuttal to Lanser's first article. Lanser responded to Diengott's attack on feminist narratology in "Shifting the Paradigm: Feminism and Narratology" (1988). A recent article by Ansgar Nünning (1995) also discusses the importance of feminist literary criticism and narratology, suggesting that "despite their contrary theoretical and methodological assumptions, are not as incompatible as the fact that the practitioners of the two approaches tend to ignore each others work" (102). The author argues that an

...alliance between narratology and feminist criticism can be an important force in the current reconceptualization of literary criticism and that a feminist poetics of narrative function can open up productive new possibilities for the analysis of both the relationship between novels and their

cultural contexts and the feminist implication of narrative strategies (102).

The limited attention given to this term does not suggest its insignificance; rather it suggests a potential venue for continued exploration and critical vision, especially in cinema studies where feminists and narratologists have had limited discussion of gendered narration.

In this third chapter, I will also outline how narratologists have conceived of three main narratological concepts -- tense (temporality), mood (focalization) and voice -- based initially on the work of literary critic Gerard Genette (1980). Temporality refers to the order in which the narrative is recounted and how this relates to history, memory and cultural narratives. Point of view (focalization) or "who sees" the narrative refers to how the story events are presented and commented on in the act of narrative presentation. Cinematic focalization is not only rendered optically, as in character point of view, but also serves as "one of the most important means of structuring narrative discourse" through the narrating perspective (Stam et al. 84). Thus, focalization can manipulate viewers and provide ideological, psychological, and emotional markers within the discourse. The category of voice considers "who speaks" the narrative or the instance of narration. Included in this area of discussion are cinematic narration, the overarching commentary in the discourse, and character narration, the voices working within the film diegesis. The category of voice also illustrates where a text can "voice"

an ideological feminist perspective and where the filmmaker herself serves as a voice in women's mythology, culture, history, and ideology.

Within all three narrative components, I suggest several considerations. Narrative analysis should include consideration of the context of production, including location, script research and development, production design, and crew participation, etc. Textual analysis which recognizes context comes from an understanding that texts emanate from a real socio-cultural-historical source. The elements that go into the making of films by artists are a part of the model of a feministic oriented narratology. Secondly, the filmmaker/author/cineatrix needs to be reconsidered as part of the narrative process because the text, as a gendered construction, needs to be considered. Some discussion about the implications of the implied author will expand current theories of narrative and feminist theory. The terms "collaboration" and "conceptualization" will be used in conjunction with the previously understood term "authorship". Instead of thinking that one person controls all images chosen for the film, I suggest that we consider that the director (past term "author") conceptualizes the means of signification and her crew collaborates to compose and compile that information. This process then leads us to an understanding of cinematic narration as a form of textual discourse that the viewer engages in, with an [often] unknown creatrix through a multi-layered signifying text as mediator. Narrative theory

focuses on the constructed text and how it serves as an enunciator to various readers. I argue that elements beyond the text must also be considered. The relationship between the spectators, the text, and the collaborators is a discursive relationship. Meaning(s) exist somewhere in the fluid dynamic of signifying exchange.

Chapter four, **Feminist Narratology Examined in the Films of Julie Dash**, will focus on the works of Julie Dash, an African American filmmaker. I have chosen to start the feminist narratological analysis with her film Daughters of the Dust (1992) because it represents a more traditional (dominant) fictional narrative, whereas the two other filmmakers work in the areas of documentary and experimental film. Although the film stands as a more traditional narrative in relation to the other films which I write about, Daughters of the Dust itself is challenging to access by mainstream audiences because of its non-hegemonic content and unfamiliar Gullah-dialect language.

The chapter will provide the historical background of the filmmaker as well as detailed analysis of this film. I will also draw on examples from three of Dash's other films: Illusions (1983), Four Women (1978) and Praise House (1991) to illustrate relevant points for a feminist narrative theory. The sections in this chapter include **Julie Dash and the Aesthetics of a Postmodern Griot in Daughters of the Dust**; **Biographical Notes on Julie Dash: Black Female Memory as Element of Change**; **Storyline Notes: Daughters of the Dust**; **Storyline Notes: Illusions**; **Storyline Notes: Four**

Women and Praise House; The Feminist Aesthetic, Narrative Voice and Focalization in Daughters of the Dust; The Gullah Language and Historical Voice(s); The Politics of Cinematic Narration: Speaking and Reading Between the Frames; and Temporality in Daughters of the Dust: African, Ancestral and "Limbo" Time.

Daughters of the Dust is a fictional drama which presents themes of historical reflection and re-insertion of African American women into filmic history. Dash's focus on creating a "mythic memory" (Dash 30) for her African American female spectators illustrates a contribution to the understanding of a feminist aesthetic. Dash answers the question: What might black women's cultural myths look like? The thematic elements of this film follow patterns similar to those of other black women filmmakers, with emphasis on self identification, centrality of female characters and grounding in real historical events.³ Dash also presents a distinct cinematic political commentary. "An integral part of the new 'feminine' poetics is to reappropriate, by means of ironic rereadings -- and rewritings -- the dominant cultural productions of the past" (Suleiman 18). Dash creates a new iconography of black women, who traditionally were portrayed as mammies, tragic mulattoes, singers/dancers or prostitutes in mainstream film history (Bogle 1973, 1988). The characters seem conscious of oppressive roles and move beyond them.

Chapter five, Dakota Means Ally: The Video Expressions of Mona Smith, will focus on the video shorts by Mona Smith,

a Native American filmmaker who works in the experimental-documentary short film form. The detailed analysis of That Which Is Between (1989) will be supplemented with comments on two other short documentaries: Her Give Away: A Spiritual Journey With AIDS (1988) and Honored By The Moon (1990).

These videos combine themes of Native American cosmology, sexual orientation, and women dealing with AIDS and illness. Terminal illness gives the illustration of finiteness, yet in Native American culture, time is cyclical and continuous like the cycle of birth, death and transformation.

Reverence for the past inflects our present and future generations. There is no concept of the word "terminal" when it comes to human experience and consciousness, it is the measure of a human's spirit that determines his or her life. This chapter includes the sections: **Native American Video Aesthetics: Finding A Voice and Walking the Red Road; Biographical Notes on Mona Smith: Leadership Through the Video Voice; Video Notes: That Which is Between; Video Notes: Her Giveaway: A Spiritual Journey with AIDS; Video Notes: Honored by the Moon; The Documentary and Experimental Impulse in Native American Cinema; Narratology and the Hybrid Film/Video Form; Focalization and Voice in That Which is Between; Focalization and Voice in Honored By The Moon and Her Giveaway: A Spiritual Journey with AIDS; Conceptual and Collaborative Narration: Mona Smith as Native Leader; and Implications of A Feminist Narratology in the Work of Mona Smith.**

Smith is one of the few Native American women working

in film and she admits to being an urban-native-American wanting to understand the link between traditional and urban culture. ⁴ To insert Smith into the history of filmmaking is a priority, but I also wish to illustrate how the thematic use of a native woman's culture is reflected in her use of the video medium. From its early beginning, film was thought to be a form of "trickery" or "magic" as exemplified in the early illusionary narratives of Georges Melies. In many ways, Smith resurrects this magical quality, portraying the profane and the sacred elements of life and death through the video eye. She is a teacher/artist/business person/explorer who uses contemporary technology for the higher purposes of helping and healing herself and her community of viewers.

Chapter six, **Witnessing the Misfits of History: Identity, Language and the Process of Translation in the Experimental-Documentary Work of Trinh T. Minh-ha**, will complete the analysis of the filmmakers by examining the work of Trinh T. Minh-ha, a filmmaker, writer, music composer, and educator. Trinh is a Vietnamese-born woman who has lived in France and Africa, and now resides in the United States. She is known for her work in the experimental-documentary form. In her critical writing -- which includes When The Moon Waxes Red (1991), Woman, Native, Other (1989) and guest edited issues of journals such as Discourse and Signs, -- Trinh challenges Eurocentric anthropological constructs as well as ethnographic filmmaking, writing and colonizing discourses. The primary

film to be examined in this study is Surname Viet Given Name Nam (1989). I will also draw on another of her films, Reassemblage (1982), to support the primary analysis. In Reassemblage, women are the "focus but not object," of the camera. This calls attention to them as subjects as well as the cinematic objectification that has been prevalent when women are represented as filmic characters (Women Make Movies 40). Building an interaction between audience/spectator and filmic text, Trinh reflects on the documentary process of representing "other" cultures. Utilizing counter-narrative techniques, the filmmaker creates a spatial and temporal continuum on which to experience "the real" through her personal perspective that simultaneously gives an opinion on the assumptions of objectivity and truth in documentary work.

The more complex Surname Viet Given Name Nam is a textual puzzle, weaving together printed texts, visual sequences, folk poetry, and stories told by Vietnamese and Vietnamese-American women. Challenging the traditions of translation, official culture, history and time, the women's voiceovers provide venues to re-historicize the film's subjects. The film examines the difficulty of remembering the past and poses the challenges of bringing the past to the present consciousness through translated voicing. Trinh disrupts the traditional cause-effect or chronological arrangement of narration for the purpose of critique. Moreover, the narrating instances are complex, so we are invited to witness layers of "construction," and layers of

meaning that the medium is capable of.

The sections in this chapter includes the following:
There is No Such Thing As Documentary: The Truth of Not Claiming the Truth, Biographical Notes on Trinh Minh-ha: Insider/Outsider and Insight Cinema, Film Notes: Reassemblage, Film Notes: Surname Viet Given Name Nam, The Conceptual/Collaborative Narrator's Voice as Focalizer in Reassemblage, Reflexive Cinematic Narration in Hybrid-Boundary Cinema, Voice and Translation in Surname Viet Given Name Nam, Conceptual/Collaborative Narrative Voice: The Documentarian and Her Subjects Construct Reality, The Narrative Construction of Truth Telling: The Documentary Interview, and A Narratology of Boundaries: Conclusions on the Feminist Cinema of Trinh Minh-ha.

Chapter seven, **Synthesis of Feminist Narratology: Open Endings and Extension in Theory**, will provide a synthesis of the textual analyses and discuss the implications of a feminist narratology as applied to these three filmmakers and their work. This chapter will also offer directions for future work in a feministic narratology. This chapter includes **Temporality and Feminist Narrative, Focalization and the Feminist Aesthetic Experience, The Voice of Feminist Aesthetics: Women Recount Their Histories, The Conceptual/Collaborative Narrator: Feminists Making Feminist Films, and Conclusions and Avenues of Future Studies in Narrative and Gender.** In many ways this book is a call to action for film scholars and filmmakers. Style, form, and genre are open ended by nature as is the theoretical

discourse of cinema studies which responds to these texts.

NOTES

1. Page references of the Ansgar Nünning article refer to the original German text. The translation was commissioned by the author and completed by Kenneth Deman (Wayne State University), 1995-6.
2. These are not the only film and video distribution companies that promote titles by women. The Cinema Guild, Canyon Cinema, California Newsreel, Milestone, Museum of Modern Art, and Frameline, among others should also be mentioned.
3. See Gloria Gibson-Hudson "African American Literary Criticism as a Model for the Analysis of Films by African American Women." Wide Angle 13.1-4: 45-54. She finds these three themes working in both literary and cinematic examples of black women's work.
4. Personal telephone interview conducted with Mona Smith, Indian AIDS Media Consortium, October 1994, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

CHAPTER ONE

NARRATIVE AND GENDER IN CINEMA STUDIES

Since decolonization as a political process is always a struggle to define ourselves in and beyond the act of resistance, we are always in the process of both remembering the past even as we create new ways to imagine and make the future

(bell hooks Black Looks 5) ¹

The Gender Question in Film Studies

A contemporary study of women filmmakers and narrative needs to begin with the question of whether it is relevant to have a conversation based solely around the concept of gender. Is this category of difference relevant to film studies, to narratology and to critical thinking? Carson et al., in Multiples Voices in Feminist Film Criticism (1994), agree that "while individuals may differ on the extent to which biological sex constructs identity, a broad consensus exists around the principle that gender inflects our material and conceptual realities in myriad tangible and intangible ways" (2). Feminist criticism and women's studies have been prevalent in institutions of higher education and progressive publications since the 1970s. So by this time, feminism might seem to have provided firm theoretical positions in countless areas of scholarship including cinema studies. Scholarship in this area is flourishing, judging by the numerous volumes published over two decades. There remain however, many areas of cinematic scholarship where the feminist philosophy could contribute to the often myopic vision of critical and theoretical work. As well there should be consideration of how a methodical,

formulaic system of narrative analysis could assist feminism in its cultural, social and ideological criticism. Feminist scholarship can expand by locating new critical methods and theoretical perspectives which further elucidate issues of gender difference.

The relevance of inquiry of the axis of difference called gender persists in political, social and cultural forms. Definitions and negotiations about gender continue evolving. Focusing on gender, as a means of separation from the whole, remains an important area for inquiry in visual studies. Structurally, politically and culturally the feminist perspective needs to be consistently considered in the area of cinematic narrative criticism and theory primarily to resist a feminist countercanon. This countercanon is the re-insertion of, or re-colonialization by master narratives before the task of challenging these narratives is complete, if it indeed ever will be. Feminist inquiry endures as an important philosophical and political base from which to interrogate dominant cultural/ideological narrative forms, to remember and examine the past, and to then suggest alternatives ways to conceptualize subjectivity and reinvent images for our future. Continuing beyond the goals of feminism which challenge oppressive patriarchal models, gender inquiry also leads to expanded possibility of ways to be when paradigms shift.

Scholar/activist bell hooks suggests a similar position when examining difference based on racial representation. "It is about transforming the image, creating alternatives,

asking ourselves questions about what types of images subvert, pose critical alternatives, and transform our worldviews" (Black Looks 4). She also states the importance of considering difference in "shifting paradigms, changing perspectives, ways of looking" (4) in addition to transforming images. But hooks also argues for critical discussion on all exclusionary discourse based on difference, not just race, class or gender.

Radical postmodernism calls attention to those shared sensibilities which cross the boundaries of class, gender, race, etc., that could be fertile ground for the construction of empathy -- ties that would promote recognition of common commitments, and serve as a base for solidarity and coalition (Yearning 27).

Critical inquiry is potentially a liberatory, interventive process through which we continually pose challenges to dominant, binary structures, especially those which support relationships of domination and subordination. We examine the imbalance of power relations when we explore the role that gender has in our cultural artifact's ability to create and communicate societal standards, beliefs and attitudes. If we become conscious of power relations, there is greater potential to dismantle them as standard operating strategies.

Recent writings in popular, political feminism primarily from conservative "neo" feminists like Christina Hoff Sommers' Who Stole Feminism?: How Women Betrayed Women (1994), Katie Roiphe's The Morning After: Sex, Fear and Feminism (1994), and Rene Denfeld's The New Victorians: A

Young Woman's Challenge to the Old Feminist Order (1995)

suggest the ease with which feminism can regress into the patriarchal mindset. Susan Faludi, author of Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women (1991), asserts that these new conservative feminists are not activists. Instead of finding these women "out on the hustings, in the streets, guarding a family planning clinic from antiabortionist attacks, or lending a hand at a battered women's shelter," you find "a handful of 'feminist' writers and public speakers who do no writing, speaking, organizing, or activism on behalf of women's equality at all" (Backlash 32). Faludi states further that these self-claimed "neo" feminists "define themselves as representing 'the average woman,' but they are privileged women who rarely stray from their ivory-tower or inside-the-Beltway circles" (32).

Declaring that insufficient progress has been made in the name of the women's movement, Faludi writes that discourse from new feminist conservatives suggest that:

Feminism has gone too far -- and ... women should quit pressing for their rights and start defending men's. Women shouldn't try to spark social change; rather, as the Women's Freedom Network's mission statement asserts, 'male and female roles should be allowed to evolve naturally' -- that is, without a political shove in a feminist direction. Of course, as the most casual student of women's history could tell you, allowing gender roles to evolve 'naturally' without the aid of political agitation, means allowing gender roles to evolve not at all. (Backlash 32).

With the same intensity that Faludi writes about political and cultural feminism, I approach this work in the field of

visual studies. In the area of gender difference and cinematic narrative, our work is not yet complete. No longer can we accept traditional narrative form and inquiry as stable, because new forms, style and genres are created everyday by women, as they represent their myriad differences. Moreover, we must envision new theories of narrative inquiry which can be used to explore these women's films. In addition, the feminist tradition of white, elite women and their theories as the representative stance for all women needs to be questioned. This becomes relevant personally. I approach this writing knowing that as a white woman I will work in areas I am marginalized from, or know about, because I do not experience life as a woman of color. I do not claim to speak for anyone or any group, but rather for the advancement of a conversation about narrative and feminism. I also acknowledge that this work is within the boundaries of a critical and theoretical language which in some ways is confining itself. This is the razor's edge feminist cinematic scholars must negotiate. I approach this work writing from one perspective, at one time in history, recognizing the limitations of theory itself. Theory is continually mobile, like the difference between my sisters and myself. Yet theory has the possibility of uniting us on some levels, opening up channels of inquiry and communication and providing a language with which to investigate cultural texts. Subjectivity aside, the rigorous field of structural narratology can be informed by a feminist perspective and films by women of color represent

one connecting bridge between these two differing methodological perspectives.

Behind each individual difference we might imagine stylistically, racially, or nationally that there is a history and a narrative worthy of theorizing. As Wallace Martin suggests, "by changing definitions of what is being studied, we change what we see; and when different definitions are used to chart the same territory, the result will differ, as do topographical, political, and demographic maps, each revealing one aspect of reality by virtue of disregarding all others" (15). Paradigm shifts do not occur easily whether they exist in the specialized arena of cinematic studies or the larger venue of politics, culture and everyday life. To explore the pathways of narrative theory and feminism contributes to a fragment of that shift and provides a case study in bringing two critical and theoretical traditions together to see what they can contribute to each other in our understanding of how cinema serves as a cultural storyteller and historian. This work also illustrates methodologically that two previously oppositional approaches -- one topological and one interpretive -- actually contribute to a more useful and constructive whole. It is at this "virtual space" between theories in which Martin suggests "the context of criticism" works, and where this dissertation explores the implications of a feminist narratology. ²

Using Gender Difference in Narrative as Radical Intervention

Cultural artifacts are essentially our cultural stories. Our lives are based around the telling of stories -- whether these are stories of the griot, the twisted hair, the ancestors, a family album or a personal account. Kelley Griffith comments on the interweaving of narrative into our daily lives.

Each of our lives is a story. We review it, add to it, and tell it. Each of our families is a story. We hear it told and retold as we grow up. Our society is web of stories. We listen to them at school, at social gatherings, at holiday festivals. Our games and entertainments are based on stories. Our religions are structured by cosmic stories that give meaning and direction to our lives. In short, we cannot escape the influence of stories. To be human is to think and communicate in stories (1).

Narrative allows us to organize and understand both our internal and external selves. Martin also supports the centrality and study of narrative in various academic disciplines, writing that "philosophers of history have shown that narration is not just an impressionistic substitute for reliable statistics but a method of understanding the past that has its own rationale" (7) and that "mimesis and narration have returned from their marginal status as aspects of 'fiction' to inhabit the very center of other disciplines as modes of explanation necessary for understanding life" (7). Stories are central to basic human relations.

The importance of narrative is exemplified by its scrutiny and use in other disciplines including history,

anthropology and human communication studies. For example in the rhetorical communication field, theorists like Walter Fisher (1980, 1984, 1985, 1987) argue for a "narrative paradigm" or narrative as a way to view the world, asserting that humans are "homo-narrans" (1984) with narrative as a central component of our existence. Fisher argues that humans are essentially storytelling beings who unite reason with myth to form a narrative world view. He traces the separation of mythos and logos, "imagination and thought...logos that originally meant story became scientific or technical discourse, while mythos was downgraded to fictional myth" (Brock et al. 180). In the description of the communication narrative paradigm, Fisher argues that these two are unified again.

Working from Fisher's narrative paradigm model, other scholars study the narrative of societal and cultural information which also comes to us in narrative form. Journalism and the presentation of news "stories" examined are examined by Bethami Dobkin (1992) and Lance Bennett and Murray Edelman (1985). Bennett and Edelman "argue that news stories as narratives disguise ideological solutions as social truth" (Brock et al. 180). In other media studies, Bruce Gronbeck (1983) and Caren Deming (1985) use a narrative approach for studying television.

Barbara Warnick (1987) and Michael McGee and John Nelson (1985) elucidate several problems of Fisher's broad narrative world view, however, suggesting that narrative does have a significant role in rhetoric, but cannot serve

as a model for the whole of communication, specifically in the areas of logic, rationality and fields of technological or scientific specialty. Robert C. Rowland (1987) commends Fisher for bringing narrative theory into rhetorical studies, but rejects narrative as a paradigm because it cannot "be separated from the rational world paradigm" (Brock et al. 181). Rather narrative is a discursive phenomena and methodological technique.

Whether as a world view, paradigm, discursive relationship or critical method, in the humanities narrative is central to the development, replication, continuation and explanation of cultural artifacts. Scholars agree that narrative is a predominant force in how human beings construct reality and relate that reality to the self and to each other.

This work operates from the premise that narrative is central to the apparatus of cinema especially fiction and documentary because cinema is a human cultural remnant. It traces the history, memory, dreams and magic of humanity. Narrative represents what William Kirkwood calls the "rhetoric of possibility" (1992). He writes that "through storytelling, rhetors can confront the state of awareness and intellectual beliefs of audience; through it they can show them previously unsuspected ways of being and acting in the world" (32). Visual arts and visual communication use storytelling or narration as the basic form of communication and creation of myth, ideology and history. Some scholars limit the definition of narrative. This study does not.

Narrative, like theory, is mobile, in that it varies in form -- as in the fictional narrative, the documentary or non-fiction narrative, and the experimental film form.

Narrative style, quality and function also fluctuates with genre. But narrative as a mechanism of creation and communication is the critical viewpoint from which this work operates. And because narrative is a basic structure in oral communication as well as mediated forms of communication, our methods of communicating, even on the interpersonal level, are infused with images that appear in popular and independent films. Mediated narratives are continually reinforced in personal, group and technologically assisted communication dynamics.

It is relevant to distinguish between narrative, myth, and ideology because they all work on some level in the films I have chosen to examine. Myth and ideology are broader ways of understanding the world and explaining metaphysical or social/political phenomena. Narrative is one pathway with which myth and ideology are communicated. Narration is the telling, recounting, act or process of relating a story. Narrative, however, can be constructed mythically or ideologically because it is informed by the world view(s) from which it emanates. In this study, myth is related to, but not exclusively understood through, content or story, the "what" of the narrative. And ideology is more aligned (but not restrictively) with narrative discourse, the manner in which story elements are presented, arranged or recounted as well as subtextual themes.

Ideology (discourse) is commentative about the mythic (story) material. So the films in some ways are both mythical and ideological in what and how they communicate, although I want to stress that concrete categorization of story or discourse into parameters of myth or ideology are not my goal. I simply want to illustrate the importance of ideology and mythic communication through cinematic narrative. A filmmaker can take license to alter historical accuracy for mythic construction -- yet she also is ideologically aware of how she presents that material to an audience. Truth telling operates on subjective levels. But a reflexive, subjective truth telling and historical examination is better than the blind belief in the false dominant, patriarchal objectivity.

Myth provides an historical base and serves to explain some phenomenon of nature such as the origin of (wo)man, or the customs, institutions, and religious rites of a people. Myth also explains why things happen through a collection of tales held in common. Any fictitious story, spoken as existing whether it be religious, historical, or poetical might be said to exist in the mythic. Myth grounds humans into a personal relationship with something larger. It is a means of connection among individuals to a whole. J.F. Bierlein writes that "a myth is often something that only begins to work where our own five senses end," (5) suggesting a metaphysical quality, rather than, let's say, a political quality. All three filmmakers are conscious of their use of specific cultural myths.³ For example, Trinh

Minh-ha writes that:

Anonymous myths give birth to other anonymous myths, multiplying and ramifying themselves without the fear of one being absorbed by the other, and beyond any myth teller's control. Like leaves of grass, they grow and die following the rhythm of impermanent-permanent nature ... Myths circulate like gifts without givers, and no myth teller (cares to) knows where they come from or who invented them (Woman, Native, Other 62).

Myth transcends "time, place, and culture," and in many ways "is the thread that holds past, present, and future together" (Bierlein 5). Julie Dash writes of wanting to create a mythic memory with her film Daughters of the Dust. This mythic memory is especially created for black women whose cinematic iconography was either absent or abused in the totality of cinematic narrative. Black women find their place through redemptive history. Nikolai Berdyayev writes that "historical myths have a profound significance for the act of remembrance. A myth contains the story that is preserved in popular memory and that helps to bring to life some deep stratum buried in the depths of the human spirit" (Parallel Myths 17). The Peasant family in Daughters of the Dust could be any family, as their story reflects ancestral traditions, familial ties, crossing over to the mainland (dominant culture), and the Black migration North.

Myth also works in the films of Mona Smith, who both calls on and reflects on her Native American cosmology in her filmmaking. Honored By the Moon tells not only the story of gay and lesbian Native Americans, but also how, according to sacred tradition -- a realistic, mythic dynamic

-- these people are revered as magical, "cross-over" beings. And in the video That Which is Between, Smith questions the very presence of Native American myth and practices as well as the appropriation of those stories, practices and legends by dominant culture.

Film and video are not the only media appropriate to communicate or construct myth, although they might be the most modern. According to Giulio Carlo Argan, "classical art is the representation of a mythological universe, a necessary type of representation since myth does not exist except through representation. Myth is tied to form, and art is the expression of a mythic conception of the world" (16). And in this artistic representational quality of myth, the element of time and quality of history is elucidated as unending. It is interesting to see the devaluation of artistic expression in the United States as indicated by decreased funding and support of artistic institutions and individuals by the central government. Capitalist materialism devalues that which represents or recalls the unreal, imagined or sacred. There is little monetary value in mythic art and expression because capitalism can not even begin to recognize its more metaphysical value.

Myth is about relationships that across time, space and place are cyclical, never-ending, constant in many ways. Bierlein distinguishes between two kinds of time in relation to history -- linear and cyclical. The Western world view, admittedly self centered, is inclined toward an epistemic

rationality and logic, often defining time as linear. History is understood to progress from some fixed place up to the current time, moving in a cause-effect, straight line format. This has been the standard model to which narratologists compare all narratives -- how does the narrative digress from what is considered a straight line. But "viewed cyclically, history is merely a procession of identical cycles. There are eternal, endlessly repeating principles," writes Bierlein citing Hindu (India) and Aztec (Mexico) mythic examples. He adds that "linear history and chronologies mean very little, as they are dwarfed by the eternal principles manifested in the cycles" (19). So narrative can be understood not from the cause-effect, linear based model, but from a cyclical and unending form, often seen through continuation of the mythic form.

My understanding of a feminist narratology uses the perception of cyclical history (and memory) as a central component in narrative. In many ways, history, a mythic history, is central to the stories that the narration recounts. And the narrative structure or discourse is cyclical, not necessarily working from a fixed point to an ending, but occurring at any time or at all times. I will elucidate further on these qualities of feminist narration in chapter two, as well as in my concluding comments following the chapters on each of the filmmakers.

Myth is a looking back to explain phenomena, whereas ideology might be thought of as looking forward. It is a basis for action. Dash, Smith, and Minh-ha illustrate how

myth is communicated through narrative content in film and video by this looking backward into women's memory. In addition, the filmmakers might be said to exemplify how texts construct and represent ideological discourse as well as myth. Their filmmaking in content, structure and style is critical of dominant order(s) and the hegemonic representation of those in mainstream film. In this way, the texts are forward acting -- reacting to dominant images and proactively changing them.

Terry Eagleton (1991) synthesizes various definitions of ideology, noting that "the term ideology has a whole range of useful meanings, not all of which are compatible with each other" (1). Often the term is confused with 'philosophy' as in using the term to "refer to systematic belief in general" (5). In addition to understanding a belief system, ideology is also based on power relations, representation and social structure in that belief system and several ideologies will work within one system so that they serve to question or maintain the dominant order. As Trinh T. Minh-ha writes "the function of any ideology in power is to represent the world positively unified" (When the Moon Waxes Red 2), something scientists, anthropologists, historians and Hollywood directors have done for years.

Eagleton also notes that "Foucault and his followers effectively abandon the concept of ideology altogether, replacing it with the more capacious 'discourse'" (8). But this reduction is problematic because as Eagleton adds, "the

force of the term ideology lies in its capacity to discriminate between those power struggles which are somehow central to whole form of social life, and those which are not" (8). In this study, the use of the word discourse is specifically understood as the way narrative story elements are arranged and presented to film viewers. I use Seymour Chatman's (1978) suggestion that discourse is understood as "the way" of the narrative (film), its expression. So to exchange ideology for the term discourse would be confusing for this case. Eagleton further distinguishes this relationship indicating that, "it may help to view ideology less as a particular set of discourses, than as a particular set of effects *within* discourses" (194).

Ideology in an historical sense has a vast range of meanings, "all the way from the unworkably broad sense of the social determination of thought to the suspiciously narrow idea of the deployment of false ideas in the direct interests of the ruling class," writes Eagleton (221). There are different ideologies -- revolutionary, conservative, reactionary -- that can operate. He continues, "Very often, it refers to the ways in which signs, meanings, and values help to reproduce a dominant social power; but it can also denote any significant conjuncture between discourse and political interests" (221). Ideology cannot be defined by noting its essence, but rather by recognizing its generalities and shared resemblances, all of which according to Eagleton, "contain a kernel of truth; but taken in isolation they show up as partial and flawed" (222).⁴

Lanser (1992) defines ideology as

the discourses and signifying systems through which a culture constitutes its beliefs about itself, structures the relationships of individuals and groups to one another, to social institutions, and to belief systems, and legitimates and perpetuates its values and practices. This definition does not address the question of whether there is a 'real' outside ideology that is not itself ideological (5).

For this study I refer to two kinds of ideology operating within the artistic and market driven worlds of cinema production. One is a dominant, conservative ideology understood as mainstream means of representation: Hollywood styles of narration, linear narrative and masculinist-patriarchal models of visual communication. This is the hegemonic ideology which maintains itself through the form and content of visual culture. The other ideology is that of resistance and revolution, which is illustrative in the filmmakers work and in the feminist critical perspective. This ideology looks back for the purposes of redefining what has developed up until now and changes that theoretical paradigm in some manner. Political resistance represents emerging ideologies and feminist narrative is political resistance. This is represented in part through the filmmakers' challenge to mainstream ways of representation while they create new ways of seeing, hearing and knowing about women's stories. This is also represented theoretically and critically with the work itself and the development of feminist narrative archetypes.

My writing is ideological in that it seeks to question

the dominant hegemony of narrative theory and criticism. Trinh Minh-ha writes that "theory as a practice changes your life entirely, because it acts on your conscience" (Framer Framed 123). I agree with her in that theory is a "constant questioning of the framing of consciousness -- a practice capable of informing another practice, such as film production, in a reciprocal challenge" (123). Ideology works on several levels within my writing and within the mediated texts which I write about. This dissertation is an interplay between conservative, revolutionary and emerging ideologies.

Both myth and ideology are created, reflected, recounted and remade by the modern storyteller of cinema. Film and other visual arts, more than any other form of modern media, are the contemporary holders of the narrative, yet they often serve as hegemonic tools with which to continually enslave cultural subordinates. Women, who are labelled "different" or "other," have often been relegated to these subordinate positions. Film has served as an implement of "othering" or social-psychological apartheid, through the use of character stereotypes, access to the means and economics of production, and modalities of enunciation. Film can be an instrument of power, as its audiovisual and narrative capabilities continually affect the way people develop and maintain their world view -- about popular attitudes, beliefs, gender differences and ultimately power and human relationships.

Significance of Feminist Narrative Inquiry

Because narrative is central to our use of language and means of communication, it is also a way to dismantle structures and recuperate histories just as it can serve as a mechanism of cultural control. Audre Lorde illustrates the power of language with her comments in "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (1979). She asks "What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable" (98). She speaks of the power of language as a tool of social control. But she also recognizes that language can be used as a means of connection, especially when marginalized persons [and their languaging] are allowed full expression in the communication process. In this creative capacity narrative serves as a means of connection. Bennett and Edelman (1985) note that

If stories can be constructed to wall off the senses to the dilemmas and contradictions of social life, perhaps they can also be presented in ways that open up the mind to creative possibilities developed in ways that provoke intellectual struggle, the resolution of contradiction, and the creation of a more workable human order (161-162).

We learn to identify with others through narrative and find common bonds and new ways of thinking through shared stories. Kirkwood describes a "'rhetoric of possibility' which addresses people 'in terms of their capacity to become what they are not, and brings to their attention things they do not already feel, know, or understand. Further, it

invites them to abandon their familiar modes of thought by challenging their current values and beliefs'" (31). This feeling of connection has been problematized by the feminist movement, as women discovered that sisters were often radically different from each other, even if they recognized some kind of coherence because of a sex-defined connection and or oppression. "Despite its utopian invocation of caring, nurturing, communalism, and globalism, the familial concept of sisterhood has not, indeed could not, escape the burden of society's prevailing inequalities" (Carson et al. 2).

Gender may be one difference through which we can align ourselves against a dominating structure, or, seek an emotional feeling of connection. We must also respect such variations in identity that come with attachment to income, occupation, race, ethnicity, class, education, religion, age, physical ability, sexual orientation, geography, marital and maternal status. Feminism and feminist narrative allows for collectivity but there is also individuality within that whole. We understand the stories of our sisters by relating them to our own, although no two stories are identical. Questions of difference, like the complimentary elements of earth and water, reflect the dynamics of individuality and separatism within a whole. Audre Lorde writes that difference should

...be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependence become unthreatening. Only

within that interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways to actively 'be' in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters ... Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged" (99).

This study adds to the body of film literature that examines narrative in terms of gender, while at the same time calling attention to the problematics of exclusivity by categorization. It does so by combining discussion of gender with analysis of other kinds of difference in film narrative.

Julie Dash, Trinh T. Minh-ha and Mona Smith are all women filmmakers. But their films present women with various threads of other differences including race, ethnicity, nationality, and age. Moreover, their artistic presentations are through innovative film styles, genres and forms. Thus, their artistic creations will reflect many elements from their spectrum of individuality which contribute to the whole of understanding women's narrative. The parameters of this study are limited in that I can offer no solutions to walking that edge -- wanting to find connection based on gender -- but recognizing the problems inherent in any kind of essentialist connection. I seek more to recognize individuality within and between a connection to the whole. Neither exists independent of the other, rather they exist simultaneously and in compliment to each other.

The study does however look at analysis of the

relationship of narrative and gender to offer a means of radical intervention in narrative theory. And, this study re-examines the feminist film and narratological critical past and fills in some of the omissions in these methods of inquiry. Feminist narratological investigation also illustrates how these women filmmakers are re-imagining their futures and if in any way those re-visioned images share in common ideological, structural, textual, thematic or communicative goals. An additional function of this work is to recognize independent filmmakers and bring their work into the arena of critical recognition and discussion. This holds most true for the previously unrecognized work of Mona Smith in academic conversations, although her work has been significant to Native American and gay and lesbian audiences. Critical writing is activism which exists to continue discussion beyond one essay or model of analysis. It is in the continued discussion and viewing of these films which fuels one spark for the filmmaker to continue. Women may choose film as their personal medium of expression. Audiences may seek out film as entertainment, education, diversion or intellectual stimulation. But that space of multiple meanings that lies between the individual and the collective -- whether it be formal reactions, publications, critical commentary, or discussion -- is where movement is most prevalent and meaningful. If no one reacted to the films I make would I still make them? On some level I utilize this medium because it speaks both for myself and others and it addresses my self and others.

NOTES

1. bell hooks is the name taken by Gloria Watkins in memory of a female family member. I will use the lower case "b" and "h" as the critic-activist does except for the first word at the beginning of sentences.

2. Wallace Martin writes about the evolution of criticism and theory suggesting that "within each theory, whether overtly or implicitly, there is the opposing voice of another theoretical perspective. The theorist has been incited into thought by the thought of another; the arena in which the two interact is the virtual space between theories that, in its entirety, makes up the context of criticism" (10). It is at this virtual space where critical projects, such as the one I undertake here, work to continue the paradigm shift away from patriarchal understanding of narrative and cinema to something else, yet undefined.

3. See James Carey, ed. Media, Myths and Narratives: Television and the Press. Newbury Park[CA]: Sage, 1988 for further discussion of myth and media.

4. Eagleton refers to ideology in a similar manner, writing that ideology is "an overlapping network of 'family resemblances' between different styles of signification" (222).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN FEMINIST FILM CRITICISM AND THEORY

Walking On the Path of My Sister, But In My Own Shoes

The field of feminist film theory and criticism has a formidable history. This chapter traces that history while attempting to synthesize significant theoretical and production practices. An historical foundation offers a contribution to understanding where gaps still exist within the field of feminism. It provides for an overarching understanding of feminist critical and theoretical development. Looking at historical and thematic progress in feminist film criticism, we see the evolution of film theory while new textual critical methods, generic form, and theoretical postures replace and refine previous positions. This section is structured historically and influenced thematically, illustrating how concerns within feminist film analysis are longitudinal in some ways. We are always informed by the past in developing current ways to understand the role of gender in filmic construction and representation.

It has been widely acknowledged that until the 1970s, attention to the history of women in film was scarce and relatively invisible in terms of mainstream (popular) recognition. Along with the "women's liberation movement" came a flurry of writings in the arena of feminist film history, criticism, and theory, beginning with two historical/image studies: From Reverence to Rape by Molly

Haskell in 1974 and Popcorn Venus by Marjorie Rosen in 1973, as well as the American journal Women and Film (1972-75). Simultaneously, critics for the British journal Screen moved to discussion of feminism and film from a more theoretical realm, utilizing textual/structuralist models like those of Freudian psychoanalysis, Lacanian semiotics and psychoanalysis; as well as Christian Metz's cine-semiotics and the cine-psychoanalysis influenced by the work of Jean-Louis Baudry's "The Apparatus" (1976) to explain audience pleasure and engagement with the film text.

Where the British school began with more theoretical arguments in initial discussions of gender and film, American feminists' original focus was on production practice as a number of feminist documentaries were produced. Production practice is a means of social criticism and women's empowerment (Mayne 1985, Rich 1978) and often provided answers to the sociological questions about women's representations that critics were initially asking. British scholars examined the discourse of cinema -- how the elements are structured. And United States feminists explored the story material -- the what of narrative. A central criticism of feminist documentary work however was that the filmmakers ignored the ideological implications of the (patriarchal) form(s) they were uncritically adopting. But as Julie Lesage writes, "feminist films explicitly demand that a new space be opened up for women in women's terms" (223). The use of traditional, realistic structure, according to Lesage, was

just to get the films produced. Filmmakers "saw making these films as an urgent public act...to bring feminist analysis to many women it might otherwise never reach" (223). The mere showing of women as central to the cinematic apparatus, not as objects or possessions began a feminist film form. Like the early tool of the women's movement -- the consciousness raising group -- feminist documentaries shared women's lives with other women. Lesage suggests that consciousness raising "was an act of naming previously unarticulated knowledge, of seeing that knowledge as political (i.e. as a way of beginning to change power relations), and of understanding that the power of this knowledge was that it was arrived at collectively" (230). Often using cinema verité techniques, which suggest a "mutual, nonhierarchical relation with her subject," Lesage suggests that feminist documentaries

...provide an essential tool for looking in a self-conscious way at women's subculture, their role in or exclusion from the public sphere, their fantasy life, their sense of 'embeddedness' in a certain object world. In other words, they become the way both back and forward toward naming and describing what woman really is....feminist films look at familiar women's elements to define them in a new, uncolonialized way (233).

But with this new film form and its manners of representing women, American feminists also realized a growing tension between the theoretical and the practical. As a result United States' critics moved their work beyond representational studies and into the theoretical components of signification and textual structure.

Camera Obscura (1974-present) is the American journal devoted primarily to discussions of women and cinematic structuralism, semiotics and psychoanalysis and, according to Jackie Byars, was "founded by American feminists who had studied in France with Christian Metz, Raymond Bellour and with their colleagues, whose work had already penetrated the male mainstream of film theory in both Great Britain and the United States" (28).¹ The founding editors of Camera Obscura define textual analysis in their first issue: "textual analysis considers the text (the film) as a dynamic process of the production of meanings, inscribed within the larger context of societal relations. The text is seen not as a closed work, but as a discourse, a play of signification, dynamism and contradiction" (1976, 5). This kind of textual analysis moved the study of cinema away from the chronicling of women's often stereotypical cinematic representations to more rigorous methods for studying cinematic signification.

Critical writing in the 1970s also paralleled the development and recognition of a "women's cinema" with works primarily in the social issue documentary, personal portrait documentary, and eventually the avant garde/experimental genres (Rosenberg Women's Reflections). Not only had feminist writers reacted to women's place or representation in the classical Hollywood film, but women were trying to explain and practice an alternative cinema of their own creation. This "women's cinema" was not so much a movement to gain rights for women in the dominant male cinema of

classical Hollywood; rather it was to forge a new aesthetic, separate from the patriarchal model while simultaneously dismantling that form (Rosenberg Women's Reflections, Kuhn Women in Film 153).

So alongside documentaries which reflected the sociological branch of feminist studies -- women portraying women's issues -- a more theoretically based "deconstructive" cinema was also in practice. This deconstructive cinema analyzes codes of mainstream cinema to break them down and in this practice aims to "create a different relationship between the spectator and dominant cinema" (Kuhn 153). In 1975, Claire Johnston suggested that women's cinema could be conceived of as a "counter cinema." Her early writing still holds as one of the primary manifestos of a feminist politics or practice of film. Bill Nichols notes that this early essay was the "first rigorous theoretical critique of sexism and the cinema to emerge within academic scholarship" (Methods II 316). In addition to proposing an analysis of the history of Hollywood female directors, Johnston also suggested using a feminine writing model aimed to investigate the possibility of a feminine cinematic language. Johnston's concern was with changing the subjectivity of women by disrupting the patriarchal means of signification within mainstream filmmaking culture. This agenda would forge a women's vision, not create a cinema of one's own separate from the Hollywood mainstream. It was a means of asserting some degree of separation through individual expression while still remaining in

mainstream marketability. Signification, to Johnston, is based on a sex/gender system that is hierarchical, with the male as dominant (Nichols Methods II 315). Moreover, Johnston argues that cinema needs to question this hierarchal structure. This early manifesto mirrored much work in the avant garde movements of France in the 1920 and 1930s and United States from the 1940s through the 1960s. Working outside of the Hollywood system, avant garde artists questioned dominant form, style and signification much like the current work of Dash, Smith, and Minh-ha.

The focus on theoretically based methodical and often structuralist forms of criticism hampered historical, biographical, and women's image studies within the canon of feminist film criticism. The structuralist perspective often replicates the hierarchal attitude that exists socially. Cultural and social image studies were thought to be inferior to semiotic text based formulaic enquiry. Theoretically the jump between the two perspectives was enormous. Currently, there is a move to fill in the gap that exists between these areas of scholarship through alternative methods of feminist textual analysis. Sociological based analysis like cultural studies and other socio-ideological-critical techniques along with structural-textual methods enhance the development of new text-based models of inquiry. Although textual analysis is a kind of history, it does not provide answers to all of the representational, historical or audience reception questions that exist in film studies.

To date, many works that can now be considered canonical in feminist film studies have been written or anthologized in books on the histories and representation of women and film, primarily as objects of consumption in front of the camera.² Reinstating women in the cinematic canon, through historical studies, through image studies or through discussion of filmic practice and documentary work was the first move by feminists, albeit a short and yet incomplete project. As feminist film critics continued their methodological inquiry and more rigorous theoretical positions became apparent, understanding the role of the spectator, both the female and male audience members as well as the processes of "textual consumption" (Byars 29) became important. Throughout this critical history and theoretical development, however, differences among women were largely ignored.

Various spectatorial theoretical works in cinema studies focus on interpretation of response to filmic representations, signification based on gender difference, and the various levels of pleasurable engagement found in consuming cinema.

This body of literature is important to a study of women directors, because at some level these women directors may "speak" to particular audiences in unique ways. Julie Dash, interviewed by bell hooks about Daughters of the Dust, says that her first audience for that film were black women, then the black community, and finally white women. Black women were who she was consciously "trying to privilege with

this film. And everyone else after that" (Dash 40). It is worthwhile to examine the literature which suggests how audiences hear and see those consciously or unconsciously constructed messages.

British writers, focused mainly around the 1975 Laura Mulvey article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" and Johnston's "Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema," found that the psychoanalytic models of Freud and Lacan were relevant to understanding the viewers' response to cinema. Although these works contribute tremendously to our understanding of how we (the audience) find engagement with cinematic images, the use of structuralist, patriarchal analytical models have continually been problematic, an issue that feminists addressed throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s and as this study also does on the level of narrative structure. Gledhill, in 1988, suggested a rebuttal to this ongoing problem in that

...recent initiatives in feminist film theory -- drawing on the work of feminist psychoanalysts and social psychologists such as Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein -- have made possible considerable revisions to the cine-psychoanalytic construction of the classic narrative text, facilitating attempts to take account of the female spectators (Female Spectators 66).

Jackie Byars' All That Hollywood Allows: Rereading Gender in the 1950s Melodrama (1991), for example, suggests that women need to look outside of male models to women's models of development to understand women and film, as well as to consider the ideological elements of the text.

Focusing in the area of psychoanalytic criticism, Byars employs the theories of Nancy Chodorow (1978) and Carol Gilligan (1982) to understand spectatorial cinematic engagement and the classical narratives of the 1950s melodrama, a genre often called "the women's film." Byars suggests that feminist film criticism employs a variety of methodological perspectives including Marxism, cultural studies, and ethnography to understand how textual analysis can be influenced by ideological influences. Janet Walker (1982) also uses the work of Chodorow and Gilligan in the 1982 "Feminist Critical Practice: Feminist Discourse in Mildred Pierce." The evolution of feminist film criticism from text-only based approaches to text and ideological/cultural studies perspectives illustrates the importance of institutional structures and their influence on cinematic texts. This dissertation also reflects the use of plural methodology as it combines a systematic topological model with consideration of history, culture and the filmmaker. Film texts are not made separate from the filmmaker and her milieu.

The work cited above has made the obvious leap of employing feminist models of psychoanalysis when speaking of women's films, much as I will employ feminist modes of narration to further the study of narratology. ³

In addition to applying feminist psychoanalysis models, many theorists have reexamined Freud's theories to explain that women can find pleasure in cinema, not necessarily through a single, dominating male gaze nor with the gaze of

the monolithic defined "woman." Rather, desire exists in spectatorship through a homosocial/sexual reverence by, or with, the film characters. Original psychoanalytic models for understanding cinema spectatorship did not only exclude differences among women in terms of race, class and ethnicity, but did so for their sexual orientation as well. Differing orientations of female sexuality also have to be considered in examining engagement with texts. Lucie Arbuthnot and Gail Seneca (1982) suggest that Lorelei (Marilyn Monroe) and Dorothy (Jane Russell) in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (1953) resist male objectification through their command of the look, stance and use of space. More importantly, the characters resist becoming reduced to objects for consumption through their development of connection and strong allegiance, even intimacy, with one another.

Jackie Stacey (1987) considers the relationship of Susan (Madonna) and Roberta (Rosanna Arquette) in Desperately Seeking Susan (1984), exploring how "the look" or gaze is recuperated by the women in the film to actively admire each other and act on that desire. In this Susan Seidelman directed film, female protagonists move the narrative forward and this "text constructs not only a feminine object of desire in the narrative, but also a feminine subject of that desire" (Stacey Issues in Feminist Film 371). A major theme of Desperately Seeking Susan is also "the construction and reproduction of feminine identities, and the activity of looking" (Stacey 371).

Women are not passive audience members in watching this film but can become active with their screen sisters' desires.

Chris Straayer (Lesbian/Feminist 1984) and Elizabeth Ellsworth (Illicit Pleasures 1986), consider lesbian feminist reception of Personal Best (1982). In examining what could be called the 'lesbian subtext' of this mainstream popular film, Ellsworth suggests that "social groups use cultural forms in the process of defining themselves" (184). This illustrates the location of some feminist film critics within sociologically based textual methodology and theory development. In "Women and Representation: Can We Enjoy Alternative Pleasure?" Jane Gaines suggests that consideration of lesbian spectatorship "causes all the premises of feminist film theory centered on male voyeurism to shift" (85).

In the initial stages of the lesbian cinematic spectatorship perspective, many writings which focused on same sex desire were personal accounts of women "reading against the grain" of mainstream heterosexual narrative desire. Although these works speak as examples that resist rigid analytical procedures, Gaines argues "in a way they deal with the gut feelings, inarticulate responses, and ordinary opinions; they are significant, however, because they remind us that meaning is always social and that hothouse studies of film language alone cannot construct a semiotics of cinema" (Gaines 85). The move to a sociologically based analysis of spectatorship was the work started in the 1980s in feminist film criticism, and which

still continues today as critics vacillate between socially influenced spectators and the psychically driven ones.

Regardless of the importance of text or spectator based theories of cinema, historical and representation studies also remain relevant in light of what are perceived as more sophisticated theoretical studies. Image studies, biographies of women in film, and historical criticism is particularly pertinent when dealing with difference among women. This critical work needs to continue because a lot of image based inquiry was initially passed over in name of rigorous theoretical "competition" between American and British critics.

Feminist film work has continually seen a split along distinct lines with some critics showing concern for the theoretical aspects of cinema while others focus on the production of films by, for and about women. This latter critical activity, which focuses on representation, social themes and activist film practice, continues to show a resurgence in the late 1980s and 1990s as black feminists focus on images of black women, black women directors and a black thematic aesthetic. Rather than concentrating on the cine-semiotics or cine-psychoanalysis that have occupied white feminists, critics of black women's filmmaking up to now have focused on social-critical based methods of inquiry. ⁴

Inquiry into a feminist generated narratology seeks to bond these critical and theoretical areas of tension by using a post-structuralist, cultural based perspective.

This perspective utilizes a structural model for analysis (narratology) from a sociological and ideological (feminist) perspective. The combination of methods supports the assertion that meaning in film is individually, socially, and politically constructed, changes over time, and is found contextually as well as textually. Ansgar Nünning notes that

the theoretical starting point of a feministically orientated narrative study is the view that narrative form does not portray timeless ideal types but rather are dependent on history and exist according to determined social and world view conditions (105).

This dissertation is influenced by feminist cultural studies as I consider the context of production and ideological components of narrative as well as women's historical and social roles. Feminist cultural studies determines how "an audience's use, interpretation, and pleasure of a specific film event is linked to that audience's social history and political position" (Ellsworth 183). So, when Daughters of the Dust moves from a small art house theatre, Film Forum, in New York City, to a larger theatre because of "word of mouth" and when the New York Times writes about audience reaction, we need to consider the sociological implications of reception and identity formation in theory development.

The clumps of women leaving the theatre looked like modern urban sisters of the women on the screen, and the film's reputation has spread by word of mouth, 'I heard about it from my mother,' says one woman. 'It's definitely a film that gives women of color a feeling of empowerment.' An elderly woman

said 'It makes you feel connected to all those before you that you never knew, to parents and grandparents and great-grandparents ... It's rejuvenating, a catharsis ... whatever color you are people want to feel that sense of belonging' (Hoban 27).

This kind of feminist film criticism rejects alignment with the male defined paradigms suggested in many of the structuralist models of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis and focuses on the social as opposed to the psychic relation to filmic address and representation (Byars 29). Even going back to 1982, Arbuthnot and Seneca suggested that it was "time to move beyond the analysis of male pleasure in viewing classical narrative films, in order to destroy it, to an exploration of female pleasure, in order to enhance it ... work with such [male] paradigms tends to obscure our own female vision" (123). This work, dated almost fifteen years ago, still resonates in feminist film theory as critics continually return to their premise of finding a unique method for women to examine women's cinematic experiences.

But sex differences, where Arbuthnot and Seneca focus, is not the only area that has been a concern for feminist film critics in examining filmic texts. Exclusive attention to gender analysis only serves, as Gaines argues, to "illuminate the condition of white middle class women" creating up until very recently a privileged academic class of women who could practice "acceptable" and applicable film criticism.

Since this theory has focused on sexual difference, class and racial differences have remained outside its problematic, divorced

from textual concerns by the very split in the social totality that the incompatibility of these discourses misrepresents ("White Privilege" 198).

Differences not based solely on gender and the development of the psyche, but on social, cultural and ideological variations are now an important part of conversations in the feminist film canon, if not the primary topic of current authorial contribution. New paradigms for theory are necessary to understand difference among women especially women of color as Gaines did back in 1986 with "White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory." In this essay she explores the lack of discussion about race in feminist film's critical emphasis on language without context, history, or other "difference" concerns. She analyzes the film Mahogany (1975), to develop theories of masquerade and transformation as well as ideological and class concerns. Issues of black beauty, commodification, passing, and the problematics of racial identity and double consciousness have to be included as part of any textual/socio-cultural analysis of this film. Are these issues relevant in films with white female characters? In other words, do we always have to consider the "blackness" and "whiteness," the "maleness" or "femaleness" in film analysis? Where the text is situated historically may serve to answer this question. Although definitions of beauty and objectification by males have been burdensome for many women, black women also bring to this film their historical experiences with racial mixing,

colorism and mistreatment by white females. What is the past history of women who identify themselves with other differences, and how is this history being cinematically represented and critiqued? This question is foundational to this work as I examine the social-historical milieu with which texts emanate.

In her essay, Gaines points out the importance of class and historical materialism which serves as an incompatible analytical partner to Freud's "universalist tendencies." These universalist tendencies are what feminist film critics and theorists have to continually question if they are to forward knowledge in their field. Yet universalist tendencies are the basis of traditional, male dominated, Western theory. According to Mary Field Belenky et al., "It is the rejection of blind impartiality in the application of universal abstract rules and principles that has, in the eyes of many, marked women as deficient in moral reasoning" (8). New paradigms for theory may be necessary to operate in this field of inquiry. Models are appropriate mechanisms of study, but not if those models represent centrist notions of gender, class and color. Models need to be expandable.

Bell hooks (Ain't I A Woman 1981, Feminist Theory From Margin to Center 1984, Black Looks 1992) has contributed writings on black representations, feminist theory and image reception but from a much more militant perspective and with the voice of the activist. ⁵

One of hooks' main premises is that criticism and theory have to be liberating (MS 1992, Black Looks 1992). If they

are not liberating, then this philosophical inquiry only serves to keep academic writers operating from centrist notions, perpetuating the milieu of inequality. Hooks' work will play a significant role in the chapter on Julie Dash, as her theories often align with Dash's cinematic practice. Hooks recognizes Daughters of the Dust as an important film for African American women, perhaps the most important film since it was the first directed by an African-American woman to have national distribution. Both women are concerned with how black women have historically been constructed in mainstream media which has been primarily for the pleasure of white audiences. Dash and hooks celebrate how black women are reclaiming their images by getting films produced and distributed to mainstream audiences. This dissertation recognizes their celebration and contributes to it by bringing Dash's work additional critical and theoretical recognition, principally regarding racial and gender difference in narrative construction.

In addition to the work by Gaines and hooks, Jacqueline Bobo has contributed to scholarship through her studies of race, representation and black women's spectatorship. Bobo examined how black women defined their relation to viewing The Color Purple (1985) in "The Color Purple: Black Women as Cultural Readers" (1988). Using British cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall's theories of articulation and cultural competency, Bobo suggests that audiences (social subjects) create meaning from texts (textual subjects), often reconstructing them to empower the self and their social

group. "Black women, as members of a marginalized social group and in face of a 'demeaning cinematic heritage,' view Hollywood films from an oppositional stance, a stance which could easily have led to outright rejection of the film" (Pribram 8). But black women have constructed alternative, and favorable, readings from The Color Purple. The meaning(s) black women experience are different than caucasian audience members or others of color, specifically black males. Many black males, including high ranking representatives of the Nation of Islam, came out in protest about representation of men in the film, although oddly enough many of these same men had not personally seen the film. Bobo's work was some of the first to specifically look at black women and film reception.

Also contributing to the discussion of race and culture are Gina Dent and Michelle Wallace, who scrutinize African diasporic intellectual production of popular culture in the 1992 compilation Black Popular Culture. This anthology covers a wide range of topics about black popular culture including black pleasure, black identity and nationalism, locationism and black culture, gender and sexuality, and racial essentialism. The expansiveness of the topics in this work illustrates the range of difference even in what is commonly labelled, albeit problematic, "the black community." Marlon Riggs' last film, Black Is...Black Ain't also illustrates the multiplicity of variance among people of African descent. ⁶ And Patricia Collins has focused solely on black feminism as different from other feminisms

in Black Feminist Thought (1990).

In feminist criticism in the 1990s, meaning is indeed a phenomenon of mobility depending on the immeasurable differences among women. More critics recognize and respond to these differences, not just African American critics or filmmakers like those mentioned above, and not solely on issues concerning race.⁷ Feminist critics who have focused on race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation in cinema have brought a whole new agenda to film inquiry. The ground breaking feminist film critics who initially worked with the theories of Freud, Lacan and Metz, for example, have had to re-challenge the main precepts of their own theoretical perspectives. Because of individual differences and constant re-evaluation of cinematic texts from various perspectives, the task of developing theory is indeed a challenging one. Theory is meant to be formulated as speculation for a whole, often a testable or consistent whole, and not based on individual differences or variables. For this work I understand theory from its Greek origin: *theoria*, a looking at, speculation, mental viewing or contemplation. And by combining various theories and methods of analysis, I commit to that idea of mobility and correlation (connection) in theoretical evolution.

Feminist Film and the Critical Voice: Seeing The Margins as Places of Power

What has become clear in the history of feminist film criticism and theory is that differences among women,

including differences in production styles, aesthetic choices, and audience reception need to be considered. This is illustrated in the ongoing conversation among theorists who are continually questioning the idea of a monolithic spectator, woman director, or female aesthetic.

The significance of this work within feminist film studies is that it contributes information about three specific filmmakers who work from very different social and cultural contexts. Feminist film criticism and theory has reached a point in development where analysis of individual texts and directors across differences other than just gender should be undertaken. I am not suggesting that I can determine a finite purpose for Dash's, Smith's or Minh-ha's filmmaking and a finite meaning in their texts, but this reflection adds to the body of literature that challenges the dominant paradigm in understanding language and narrative structure/form, gender constructions, image creation and meaning. Narratology also bridges with feminism in that it offers a systematic means of studying difference.

Despite the previously described critical accomplishments in the areas of race, nationality, and sexual orientation, the structuralist models of psychoanalysis and semiotics have primarily been where feminists have examined the development of a cinematic language. These theories focus on women's secondary status both symbolically and politically.

De Lauretis (1984), Doane (1982, 1987), Modleski

(1988), Kaplan (1988), Mayne (1990), and Silverman (1988), among others, have contributed important works in the feminist film critical canon to the understanding of cinema and psychoanalysis. Much of this conversation has focused on women's subordinate status in the symbolic order, usually defined as a "lack of something" or deficiency. In Freudian circles, this is the lack of the penis (not being a male), thus a continual lack of empowerment in patriarchal order. Lacanian psychoanalysis focuses rather on the symbolic order of language and meaning, indicating that language develops around the possession (or not) of the phallus (patriarchal power) and because women do not have the resultant symbolic power of phallic possession, they are thus denied agency or control of any means of signification or languaging. In this radically simplified presentation, we see the justification for women's absence in the power structure of male dominated hierarchies. While this has been a prominent discussion among psychoanalytic cinema scholars this notion of possession and power could expand to incorporate other understandings of relations of power. For example withdrawal or withholding by women has been a means of exerting power in the action oriented patriarchal culture. This however is often a reaction to, or within, that sexist power struggle, rather than a normative way of operating.

In cinematic practice, women not only have been absent from powerful, realistic and subjective on-screen roles, but they have been labeled as absent/lacking from involvement in the production side of filmmaking. Only a select few women

have served as the creators of popular, mainstream images and been recognized for their contributions. By concentrating on what has not happened for women filmmakers or their "lack" of significance, we may be promoting a neglect of recognition for those pioneers that do exist in a wide range of genres, forms and contexts of cinema. This is accomplished by continually relegating women (and other non-traditional filmmakers/artists) to marginal places in terms of film production and then seeing that marginalization as negative and natural. Belenky et al. note that "as dichotomous 'either/or thinking' is so common in our culture and as we tend to view human beings as closed systems, the expenditure of energy in one part of the system has been seen inevitably to lead to depletion elsewhere" (7). Why does the center have to be adjudicated as the best? Marginality is defined as lesser or subordinate by a capitalist socioeconomic structure that understands centrism as success/power. Do we need to continually refer back to the binarisms of presence/absence or greater/lesser established by psychoanalysts? Do women filmmakers have to define themselves by dominant standards of success -- receipts at the box office? Or can a new conversation about successful image creation be constructed and useful? It may be that it is in independent film production circles that women can do their best work without compromising to a general public that seems to continually seek sophomoric comedy or violent forms of entertainment. This may also be true of male filmmakers who have artistic visions which

digress from mainstream form, genre or content. The current increasing wave of independent films in national distribution is a welcomed trend.

This argument for equal recognition of cinematic work parallels the perpetual debate between "working" stay-at-home mothers, "working" outside-of-the-home mothers, and those who do both. All of these women are essentially productive in their work, but the mother who chooses to work outside of the home is often seen as more successful simply because she is generating a monetary income, has presence in a public space, and involves herself to some extent with the discourse of hierarchal patriarchy (corporate/capitalist America). The stay at home mother may indeed be performing the more important task, the full time raising of the next generation of leaders, scholars, teachers and creators of culture. She also is a primary agent in the reproduction of ideology, contributing to the sustenance (or revolution) of a socio-political-economic and cultural system. But because her work is domestic and she does not generate a monetary income raising her children, she is not part of the capitalist success story, and she is often understood as victimized by patriarchy. We need to acknowledge that both kinds of women are productive by celebrating their right to make individual decisions without judging either as good or bad, successful or failing, rich or poor or any of the other binary judgements available in the dominant narrative language. Maybe we can see women filmmakers as successful even if they do not strive to make Variety's top 50 grossing

films of the year. If women filmmakers work from those places where distribution is difficult, with audience and revenues below Hollywood's economic standards, are they similar to the stay at home mothers? These women image-makers also create, maintain and alter social, political, economic and cultural systems. Independent women filmmaker's products may not be seen by millions of people, but the importance of their work is that it is conceived, produced and seen at all. Women who raise their children at home are productive, albeit from places on the margin of capitalistic production, just like independent women filmmakers. This does not diminish their importance in this ideological system, it just relegates their work to a different economic location.

But women's filmmaking has not been as sparse or "lacking" as many film critics have conveyed or as I have eluded to. Women filmmakers have been present since the beginning of filmmaking, although they often work in the independent realm or with limited audiences. Their filmmaking has been marginalized by dominant culture as Rich suggests in her early work "In the Name of Feminist Film Criticism" (1978). Since women's filmmaking remains part of the dominant language structure of culture, Rich proposed new languaging to examine women's cinema (34) based on the early British and American feminists' theoretical works. But, there are many more feminists and feminisms than just the American or British that Rich suggested. Feminists of color and those writing about issues of race and ethnicity

have proven this. Rich's article still resonates in feminist film studies because of her suggestions about the use of language in critical work. The language feminists use is a "problem common to an oppressed people at the point of formulating a new language with which to name that oppression, for the history of oppression has prevented the development of any unified language among its subjects" (36). Rich's comments also point to the importance of using one's own language to name oneself. Haig Bosmajian writes that "self-determination must include self-definition, the ability and right to name oneself; the master/subject relationship is based partly on the master's power to name and define the subject" (6). And the oppressed -- women -- continue to buy into this dominant (master) language to judge one another. As I stated earlier, the idea of a unified feminist language or filmmaking aesthetic also may not recognize differences among women. This was the most significant problem in much of the early research on women and feminism. So as Lorde suggests, difference is the key to recognize women, but the language to speak of those differences must also reflect that dynamic.

So it would seem that a revolutionary form of filmmaking, and language to speak of that practice, needs to employ radical techniques. But how are these to be agreed upon and applicable? As Rich suggests, "we don't all speak the same language, but translation is possible" (45). Translation may be just what Lorde was speaking of when she spoke of that interdependence among women, within which

...mutual (non-dominant) differences lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with true visions of our future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being. Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged (99).

Translation may be accomplished by using theories of the dominant paradigm, but from culturally critical positions on the margins where these women filmmakers work. Positioning then becomes the place of empowerment. This seems to contradict the statements by those who challenge the use of, or alignment with, male dominated discourse in feminist practice. But I write from this place of contradiction.

On the one hand, some feminists are reading films from our own developing perspective, and seeking to define and name that perspective. On the other hand, some feminists are reworking and refining male paradigms and seeking to understand male experience with film (Arbuthnot and Seneca 124).

This study seeks to address this problem by using a fusion of methodological practices, narratology on the one-hand which is aligned more with structural precision and a topological model, and feminism, with its cultural, economic, and political philosophy of challenging centrist and hierarchal ways of operating. Structuralism allows us to replicate the textual analysis across texts, time and genre, providing some kind of model from which to work. One of the celebrations of feminist criticism is that it claims no center, but finds its political consciousness in

destabilizing the centrism of academic criticism and theory. Indeed this has been problematic in feminist criticism -- what exactly are the methods feminists consistently use? Feminism offers to this study a perspective on historical and contextual cinematic elements including ideology, social and cultural values, where narratology focuses on the structural elements and form of the text. Structuralism becomes more fluid with the influence of feminism and the feministic perspective more focused longitudinally. This feminist-narrative study reinforces that phenomenon of mobility within models.

The margins are a place once thought to be inferior, but they may in fact offer more power in terms of liberating critical work. Hooks suggests that for "those of us who would participate in the formation of a counter-hegemonic cultural practice [is] to identify the space where we begin the process of revision" ("Choosing the Margin" 15). This "politics of location" or "radical openness is a margin -- a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary" (19). As this work develops, my goal is to see the inside from outside and the outside from inside simultaneously -- constructing a bridge from the dominant theories of narratology to the ideological and cultural space of feminism.

Trying to find a unified language to talk about women's cinema is as difficult as accessing the films which I will write about because women filmmakers often work from the margins which are places of individual or social empowerment

rather than popular or mass entertainment. The "nagging question of accessibility" is raised (Mayne Women at the Keyhole 1). Where are women's films and do women and men have access to viewing them? Relegation to the margins does not mean women have not made a mark in the film industry or in the art world, but access for all women and men to these films is of concern. If a piece of artistic creation is thought to be inferior or substandard, especially in the popular arts realm, its availability often reflects that. If audiences cannot readily watch many women's films, it proves challenging to develop a consistent theoretical or analytical language with which to discuss them. Is popularity required to develop a consistent theoretical discussion? ⁸ One of the problems in raising these issues in this work is the reality of the capitalist, mass culture system in which we live and our continual maintenance and replication of that. Nothing short of an artistic and cultural revolution would provide a concrete solution to change the definition of success in this country. But critical writers, like the feminist filmmakers they study, contribute to that revolution. Austin Scott-Long writes "In this country, 220 years after it was founded in the name of freedom, it still takes money and access to the arts to break free" (1). Quoting from the newsletter, Main, of the National Alliance for Media Arts & Culture, at length further illustrates the importance of artists and public access to the arts in this country.

Access to the arts...is a universal need.

Whenever the economy, the civil authorities and the repressive forces in society have conspired to confuse us about what is really going on in our lives, it's always the arts that manage to smuggle in the powerful truths we need to clarify our vision and figure out what's really happening. That's why artists have always been persecuted in bad times. We the people can't fully understand who we are, can't fully appreciate where we are headed, can't fully explore our potential as individuals and as groups, until we've been able to touch the souls of others who have sweated with our midnight fears, struggled with our feelings of confusion, tasted our bitter anger and learned to emerge triumphant and hopeful, strong and creative. For access to the souls of many others, we have always depended on the arts (Long-Scott 1-7).

As the above quote illustrates, in addition to finding the theoretical language with which to discuss women's filmmaking, the work of feminist critics should be to consider the importance of working from the independent realm. This can be a place of power, rather than the dominant and popular realm, where entertainment, frivolity and an "un-consciousness" exists. It has traditionally been the marginal (independent) filmmaking practices of documentary, socialist realism and women's film that have provided audiences with relevant social and historical communicative activism. Hooks identifies marginality as more than a "site of deprivation" but as "the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance" so that the marginality of women working in independent film is the "central location for the production of a counter hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives" ("Choosing the Margins" 19).

Translated cinematically, counter hegemonic narrative discourse is found not just in subject matter which may circulate primarily around the communities of women but also in the habits and form of filmmaking itself, its narrative structures. In this study, marginalism is a sign which suggests new gateways to understanding how women filmmakers' images serve the purpose of criticizing and then reclaiming the languages in which representation takes place.

Although it is challenging to access women's films, they are indeed available and numerous. This relegation to marginality (independent filmmaking) has made it seem that women were physically absent from film, when they were just absent from its mainstream hegemonic distribution and discussion practices. It is also important to note that just because filmmakers can be "classified" according to a sexual difference does not exclusively make them marginal. It is the mode of address that makes a film political, revolutionary, visionary or not. Women can work from the outside in or from the inside out, as seen in the work of Dorothy Arzner. Arzner, although seemingly trapped in the Hollywood production system of the 1930s and 1940s, imagined a world where women had subjectivity, controlled the movement of narrative and gave voice to their individuality and desires (Mayne 1994).

In 1969, Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni suggest that working in the mainstream does not necessarily mean working for the mainstream. Recognizing film as a "product, manufactured within a given system of economic relations,

and involving labour... it becomes transformed into a commodity, possessing exchange value...governed by the laws of the market...It is also an ideological system" ("Cinema/Ideology/Criticism" 683-4).

Identifying the political nature or function of film, Comolli and Narboni suggest that film can fall into several categories: (1) those that work in the dominant ideology, unaware of themselves as products, working in the mode of realism. These are primarily commercial films and women directors like Penelope Spheeris and Penny Marshall work here. Films can also (2) attack ideological assimilation through direct political action, break down traditional ways of depicting reality, and deal directly with a political subject (686). Mona Smith's work is very much in this mode, addressing the Native American gay and lesbian community as well as AIDS activism. These are marginalized subjects at best. Feminists have spoken much about films that Comolli and Narboni suggest (3) work against the grain. Here, content is "not explicitly political, but in some way becomes so through the criticism practices on it through its form" (686). Disruptions in temporal arrangement, narrative construction, and instances of subversive moments like the example of direct address, in Arzner's Dance, Girl Dance (1940) or Euzhan Palcy's A Dry White Season (1989), confront the viewer in some way. Ruptures within the classical narrative form are stylistic examples of how films can be read, or work, against mainstream ideology and film form. Julie Dash's work can be understood as working in this

manner. She works somewhere between mainstream film form and mythic representation offering stylistic depictions of the lives of black women. Narboni and Comolli also suggest that films can (4) have an explicitly political content like Thelma and Louise or 9 to 5 but they do "not effectively criticize the ideological system in which they are embedded because they unquestionably adopt its language and its imagery" (687). These films are often caught in the system they wish to break down. Films can also seem to fit neatly into the ideology under which they were produced, but some can be thought to (5) render ideology ambiguous through the use of some kind of internal criticism. "Ideology becomes subordinate to the text" as these films practice self criticism (687). Trinh T. Minh-ha works in this reflexive mode by questioning gender roles, ideology and language through the very system she uses to communicate these criticisms. The final way of categorizing films in terms of their ideological modes of criticism are those films of (6) live cinema or direct cinema, "arising out of political ... social events or reflections" which have the potential to attack the problems of depiction if they move beyond merely showing audiences the "actualities" of ideology without criticism of that ideology (Comolli & Narboni 688).

Although I limit the discussion in this study to three women, the subject of film history and working from places of marginality to dismantle dominant cinematic practice pervades other filmmaking practices. Comolli and Narboni's work suggests that films work politically on a variety of

levels often from within the dominant system to promote a marginal or non-dominant discourse. Difference is not based solely on sex difference, even though this is a parameter in which I am presently working.

Feminist Criticism and Aesthetics: Searching for and Speaking in One's Own Voice

A primary goal of feminists has been to reinsert women back into history where they belong but were long omitted. The international presence of such historical filmmakers as Alice Guy, Germaine Dulac, Leni Riefenstahl, Agnes Varda and Lina Wertmuller have presented a select canon of film works with which to examine the early presence of women's voices in the primarily male world of film. Women appeared to be productive much earlier in film history outside of the United States. In the United States, Mabel Normand, Dorothy Arzner, Maya Deren, and Ida Lupino have made inroads into the dominant Hollywood system and in the early American avant garde. The academic focus on these directors, primarily by women critics, suggests the directors' shared failure to garner places of significance in the male world of film production and recognition, yet their work remains significant in the canon of women's media, art and alternative representations of life experiences. Women have had to name themselves as historically significant. And what is feminist film history? This history names important women contributors to cinema. This history also takes on the task of creating or acknowledging a unique aesthetic,

one which recognizes, at times, the political activist, the avant garde artist or the essentialist female, albeit theoretically problematic. This history also utilizes women's films for critical and theoretical development in understanding cinematic narrative and function.

Little acknowledgment of women has been a common occurrence in mainstream film making, but their presence and recognition as producers of meaning, ideology and as social critics cannot be negated. To facilitate this study on women's filmmaking, the concept of "women's film" itself has to be raised, defined, challenged and reworked. But before taking on this project I would like to pose the broader question -- Is there a feminist aesthetic? Moreover, what implications are suggested by identifying an aesthetic with terms such as feminist, feminine and womanist? These terms are used both specifically and interchangeably by those who have discussed women and art. General concepts of aesthetics, women and artistic production needs to be discussed first, then I can move onto a specific feminist film practice.

The idea of developing a feminist aesthetic in which to explain the works of art by women had been deliberated across disciplines. For example, French essentialist-feminists like Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous and Monique Wittig have focused solely on creating a feminine language with which to rewrite master narratives and understand women's writing. Aesthetics in Feminist Perspective (1993) edited by Hilde Hein and Carolyn Korsmeyer, examines the

philosophy of art and takes up as a challenge the nature of feminist, feminine or female art, creativity and interpretation. The 1985 Feminist Aesthetics, edited by Gisela Ecker, is a compilation of essays by German women in the areas of women's writing, film, architecture, still art, speech, the woman artist and feminist aesthetics. Ecker writes that it is "important to pursue not a 'feminine' but a 'feminist' aesthetic" because a feminist aesthetic "indicates a commitment which is relative to the historical moment" taking into account the "complications of subjectivity" and "feminist investigations of aesthetic theory necessarily aim at a critique of traditional assumptions" (21).

A feminist aesthetic cannot be based only on the biological difference of women and men, but should offer a political base from which to rethink constructs of "poetics." Cinema critics Judith Mayne, in The Woman at the Keyhole, and Teresa de Lauretis, in Technologies of Gender, cite Silvia Bovenschen's "Is There A Feminist Aesthetic?" when developing their theories on "women's cinema." Bovenschen offers some suggestive commentary to consider in regards to feminism and aesthetics and concurs with the comments I presented earlier by Audre Lorde about difference as the catalyst for creative potential. Difference or marginality does not have to be looked at as "deficiency, loss, self-effacement and deprivation, but rather as opportunity" (Bovenschen 29). Bovenschen suggests that we "rid ourselves of female-counter culture" but acknowledges

that "the very different way in which women experience themselves, enables us to anticipate different imaginations and means of expression" (Bovenschen 32). In defining a feminist aesthetic, women are continually posed with the problem of defining themselves in opposition to something. And this idea of a women's specificity often in contestation with a man's has "subversive potential" (47).

Bovenschen's primary contribution to this discussion is placing the feminist aesthetic in the "pre-aesthetic" realm. Pre-aesthetic means before a canon of established aesthetics has been founded, before standards or limitations in which to practice creativity and have that work evaluated by some set of standards. The feminine mode of perception is communicated by a woman in her daily routine. Decoration, clothing/costume, make-up, weaving, knitting, functional artworks have always been considered "inferior, commonplace" but always arenas where women were productive (45). These fall into the feminine mode of creativity. This pre-aesthetic relates to early 1970s women's documentaries which although technically crude, offered useful information, education and consciousness raising to female viewers. Although determined lesser because these aesthetics are in the domestic or personal sphere, women came from artistic and creative realms on many fronts in everyday life. Art was a part of their daily ritual. Their aesthetic was not always for an audience or for a monetary exchange system, but for themselves and their communities, be it family or other women in their social circle. The films I examine in

this study in many ways reflect this perspective. They appeal in some respects to a "community" or collective of women, whether they be African-American women, Native-American women, or Vietnamese-American women. And they appeal to the larger identified community of women who recognize something of themselves in the images on the screen.

Here, Bovenschen moves out of the feminist aesthetic (politically) to using the term feminine to illustrate that there are instances of feminine, gendered art. In the domestic realm, art is named as feminine. Taking it out of the domestic realm and recognizing/judging it publicly names it as feminist, because it now moves to a social, political plane. To her, "feminine aesthetic production takes place by means of a complicated process involving conquering and reclaiming, appropriating and formulating, as well as forgetting and subverting" (47). This aligns with arguments of feminist scholars. In addition, the practice of feminist art is the rejection of formal criteria, which "enables us to reject categorically the notion of artistic norms," usually those of patriarchal culture (48). To Bovenschen, a feminist art is simply the practice of art, knowing women's modes of perception and having an aesthetic awareness, not "an unusual variant of artistic production or about a painstakingly constructed theory of art" (49). Feminist art is linked to the maternal aspect of creation. We might be able to recognize feminist art across various differences among artists, but it is in speaking of that art, without

using the patriarchal set of standards to adjudicate it, that reflects the notion of the feminist aesthetic.

Some theorists are concerned rather with the idea of a female counter-canon which Bovenschen cautions against. This counter-canon is in direct rebuttal to patriarchal canonic examples of art, creativity and the poetics which are used to speak of those processes. This line of discussion recognizes the biological differences of women and men and determines an aesthetic based on these differences, promoting the woman to a place of importance both inside and outside the domestic sphere. It also recognizes the eroticism between women and bases a feminine aesthetic on recognition of that pleasure.

In Feminist Aesthetics, Lenk forwards the idea that a 'space' for women is necessary for their artistic production. This space is more than a physical space, but an emotional space where a woman can "develop new relationships to herself through relationships with other women. Women will become the living mirror of woman in which she loses herself in order to find herself again" (Lenk 57). This relationship to self also suggests a recollection of remembering among all women who "repeat hundreds of old relationships" in the space of their imagination (57). Several of the films that I examine in this study are concerned with memory and history. Collective memory of women is a reoccurring theme in considering a feminist aesthetic. What do women's films do with the temporal structure that ignites her audience's

recollection of being a woman in the community of other women? Lenk's feminist aesthetic is a divisive one, where the sexes drift away from one another and do not learn to acknowledge or appreciate each other in this separate existence. It is important to review essentialist, sex-based theoretical development, however problematic and restrictive these theories are. We can also move beyond this. An initial phase in developing a true essential self is to know that self then see it as part of a whole. Attention to essentialism promotes this. The next phase then is to recognize the complimentary or shadow (the masculine) with which we need integration.

Much literary scholarship on feminist aesthetics follows the path of sex-based essentialism. This is primarily exemplified in the works by the French psychoanalytic feminists Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, and Monique Wittig, as well as Julia Kristeva. ⁹

Concurrent with what other feminists write, the French feminists think that an "integral part of the [new] feminine poetics is to reappropriate, by means of ironic rereadings - - and rewritings -- the dominant cultural productions of the past" (Suleiman 18). This reappropriation places women into texts as subjects, not objects. This subjectivity is a new "poetics and new politics, based on women's reclaiming what had always been theirs but had been usurped from them." This perspective gives women "control over their bodies and a voice with which to speak about it" (Suleiman 7). This vocality is interpreted as a language founded not on the

patriarchal principles of "'phallic discourse' -- characterized by linearity, self-possession, the affirmation of mastery, authority and above all unity" (Suleiman 13) or based on the ideology of submission to the rules of "logic, syntax ... homogeneity, and realist representation" (16). This writing is based on the female body and sexuality, and according to Cixous would call for "a kind of writing that would break open the chains of syntax, escape from the repressiveness of linear logic and 'story-telling,' and allow for the emergence of a language 'close to the body'" (Suleiman 16). Weigel writes that Cixous' thoughts on feminine language are "the proximity of the 'feminine' to what flows, to the body, to rhythm, the formlessness of a feminine text without beginning and end, the closeness to feelings and touching" (76).

In some ways this counter-canonical language parallels the work of avant garde filmmakers who fragment the dominating narrative structure of classical Hollywood using techniques such as open endings, ruptures in the narrative with direct address or counter voice-over narration, ellipses, anachronies, no-subject film narrative and other techniques which "make strange" the traditional logic of the narrative.¹⁰ Many feminists have appropriated these techniques in their filmmaking practices, but many men have as well. Bertolt Brecht's critical discussions on "distancetation" and "alienation" in reaction to realistic theatre exemplifies early work that has influenced counter-canonical arts activity. Therein lies the problem with

totally gendered language and film styles. Countering dominant forms is not exclusively the realm of women's art, yet counter-hegemonic techniques are appropriated by feminists artists -- whether they be male or female feminists.

This feminine language, according to Weigel, is much more than considering the biological woman in stylistic construction; it works to dismantle other constructions that do not speak to the experience of being woman. Quoting Luce Irigaray, Weigel writes:

This style or this 'writing' of woman sets fire to the fetishised words, appropriate terms, well-constructed forms. This style does not give privileges to the gaze...the simultaneous would be its 'essence'...which never pauses in the possible self-identity of some form. It is always flowing---Its 'style' opposes every kind of rigidly constructed form, figure, idea, concept, and makes them explode (75).

This language is feminine from the perspective that it addresses the reader/viewer as a woman through its shape and performance which is related to the essential female body and function (bleeding, conception, birthing, and nursing). It is feminist in that it subverts dominant patterns of narrative and assumes the political-ideological stance of dismantling the patriarchal structures of language.

This begins to get at the differences between feminine and feminism. Where feminine language or film seeks to come from the place of woman, and speaks, sees or creates from the female biological space, Teresa de Lauretis writes that feminism is a "critical reading of culture, a political

interpretation of the social text and of social subject, a rewriting of our culture's 'master narratives'"

(Technologies of Gender 113). In this passage we can see that feminism fits into a long history of politically revolutionary thought and action. Much as feminists question issues of gender and domination, scholars of class have aligned with radical socialism or Marxist discourse. De Lauretis argues that "femaleness (the fact of being female) and femininity (as a positionality of desire, a narrative trope, a figure of style)" does not answer the question of what she calls author-ity or authorship, a writing in one's own voice which in itself is "admittedly outmoded, patriarchal, and ethically compromised" (Technologies of Gender 113). Only a feminist aesthetic might provide the opportunity for conceiving new paradigms for reading and understanding creative works by both women and men.

The number of books and anthologies published about women's writing and literary theory suggest that this subject is vital among scholars and that there is no conclusive answer to the question -- is there a feminist poetic? Toril Moi's Sexual/Textual Politics (1985), Rite Felski's Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change (1989), and the collection Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship (1987), edited by Shari Benstock from a series of articles in Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature, are some examples of range of this scholarship. Also contributing to this weave of discussion are works by, and

about, differences among women like This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color (1981), edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, Feminist Studies/Critical Studies (de Lauretis 1986), Changing Our Own Words: Essays on Criticism, Theory, and Writing by Black Women (Wall 1991) and Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism (Mohanty et al. 1991). A feminist aesthetic also has to take into account variance among women of different cultures. These latter works offer thoughts on differences among women and move away from the essentialist argument that all women create art in the same way. Despite this, essentialists still offer a unique perspective on women's culture and language which lead to a female/women's aesthetic.

Heide Gottner-Abendroth's "Nine Principles of a Matriarchal Aesthetic" also supports this notion of female as different, separate, and superior. But her argument also contributes the notion that feminism conjures a new way of seeing creation (aesthetics). "Modern matriarchal art...is a complex subversive process in a patriarchal society. It represents a subversive process which is not interested in power and control and therefore does not need a disguising ideology" (Gottner-Abendroth 83-4). This art, like Mona Smith's films of activism, are about empowerment of self, though not through power over another. Matriarchal art is parallel to individual and community ritual which facilitates social change by overriding the divisions promoted in the traditional aesthetic sphere. Matriarchal

art is not art in the patriarchal definition.

It is rather the ability to shape life and so change it; it is itself energy, like a drive towards the aestheticisation of society. It can never be divorced from complex social action because it is itself centre of that action (Gottner-Abendroth 84).

A feminist aesthetic re-images and re-appropriates our ways of knowing. The feminist aesthetic recognizes the conceptual and creative function of women through their art form and expression. This study uses three filmmakers who practice such aesthetics on the level of narrative techniques, artistic purpose and use of the historical subject.

There is also a move to consider more contextual elements in the creation process as practiced by Laurie Shrage (1993), who suggests that the feminist film aesthetic can be found only in the contextual, not the textual. This approach "renders visible the relativity and ambiguity of meaning in art: the plurality of perspectives from which a work can be viewed" (Shrage 141). Using a cultural studies/ethnographic approach, Shrage suggests that to understand a feminist aesthetic is to study audience cinematic habits which inevitably inform the viewer. She also seeks to understand epistemic distancing or how audiences suspend their common sense beliefs about the codes of film genres. ¹¹ Shrage suggests that the critic examine interaction of film texts with socially ingrained principles which are historically and culturally specific as well as explore how the authority of these contextual principles

vary in accordance with other differences -- race, sexual orientation, and so forth (141). This parallels the work by other feminists who consider the impact of media on shaping cultural norms, familial relationships and gender, race and class identity like Jaqueline Bobo (1992), Andrea Press (1991), Lynn Spigel (1992), and Mary Ellen Brown (1990). Shrage's recognition of multiple critical methods and theoretical perspectives in understanding a feminist aesthetic support my goals of combining narrative textual analysis with feminist consideration of production context (the actual making of the film) and historical content.

This study will assume more of a text-based approach in determining meaning in and of the texts, however I do consider the differences among women by selecting the films of three different women for the study. I also consider some level of contextuality as part of a textual analysis by utilizing theoretical writings from the social-cultural-ideological base from which these filmmakers associate themselves. For example, I would not consider examining the films of Julie Dash without knowing how an Afrocentric and black feminist theoretical perspective may influence the content of the text of Illusions or Daughters of the Dust. Context influences interpretation and context influences the usefulness of our textual models of analysis.

Feminist, Feminism, Feminine, Female, Woman, Womanist: What Are We to Name Ourselves and Creative Expression?

How do women's films or women's cinema fit into this

discussion on feminist aesthetics? The conceptual discussion of a feminist aesthetic has considered textual "femaleness" in its relation to the body, writing or creativity based on sex-defined characteristics. These characteristics then explain how women communicate, whether it be using a different kind of language or cinematic style. "Woman" and "female" are descriptive, biological terms for the chromosomal composition of a human being. Socially constructed terms like "feminine" or "lady" describe what types of behaviors these human beings supposedly possess. The term "feminine" in and of itself may not be negative, but the qualities associated with it more often than not fall into a subordinate position in the patriarchal, hierarchal structure. Haig Bosmajian writes that:

The idea that women are to play a subservient role and not be taken seriously has been perpetuated through the use of the word 'lady.' One might, at first glance, think that referring to a woman as a 'lady' is something complimentary and desirable. Upon closer examination, however, 'lady' turns out to be a verbal label connoting the nonseriousness of women (96).

Toril Moi (1985) agrees with the difficulty in defining femininity and thus also defines a topology of women's writing, especially when femininity is defined as marginal, or lacking in space in the patriarchal order. Belenky et al. note that "'women's talk,' in both style (hesitant, qualified, question-posing) and content (concern for the everyday, the practical, and the interpersonal) is typically devalued by men and women alike" (17). They add that women's ways of knowing are continually ranked inferior.

"It is generally assumed that intuitive knowledge is more primitive, therefore less valuable, than so-called objective modes of knowing" (Belenky et al. 6). Moi synthesizes Julia Kristeva's comments writing that Kristeva "flatly refuses to define 'woman:' 'To believe that one 'is a woman' is almost as absurd and obscurantist as to believe that one 'is a man'" (163). Suspicious of the concept of gender identity, Moi notes that Kristeva challenges identity, "even sexual identity...in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged" (163). Working theoretically in the name of women is demanding because "though political reality (the fact that patriarchy defines women and oppresses them accordingly) still makes it necessary to campaign in the name of women, it is important to recognize that in this struggle a woman cannot be: she can only exist negatively, as it were, through her refusal of that which is given: 'I therefore understand by "woman"', she continues, 'that which cannot be represented, that which is not spoken, that which remains outside naming and ideologies'" (163). Trinh Minh-ha notes a similar predicament when naming oneself a feminist.

Naming yourself a feminist is not without problem, even among feminists. In a context of marginalization, at the same time as you feel the necessity to call yourself a feminist while fighting for the situation of women, you also have to keep a certain latitude and to refuse that label when feminism tends to become an occupied territory. Here, you refuse, not because you don't want to side with other feminists, but simply because it is crucial to open the space of naming in feminism (Framer Framed 151-2).

Feminism, like feminine and femininity, is also a socially and ideologically constructed word, but with political implications. So in the realm of feminist aesthetics, the notion of a new "feminine" language moves beyond the gyno-descriptive and into feminist politics, to challenge patriarchal ways of categorizing, defining and recognizing art. One definition of feminism indicates that you promoted an equality among all people, regardless of sex, whether that equality relates to wages, sex-role relationships and definitions, job parity or audio-visual representation. I personally still associate with that meaning -- the expansive, humane identity of feminism -- while simultaneously recognizing the inherent problem of exclusionary naming that Minh-ha suggests.

Black feminists offer another term to consider. The term "womanist" was coined by novelist Alice Walker who writes that a "womanist" is a

...woman, a Black feminist or feminist of color; from the Black folk expression, 'you're acting womanish.' Want to know more than is considered 'good for one.' Responsible, in charge, serious. Also a woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's company, women's culture, women's emotional flexibility and women's strength. Traditionally capable...loves struggle, loves the folk, loves herself -- regardless!

Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender (qtd. in Dickerson 184).

Patricia Collins, quoting Walker in Black Feminist Thought, continues the definition of womanist:

One is a 'womanist' when one is 'committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people,

male and female.' A womanist is 'not a separatist, except periodically for health' and is 'traditionally universalist, as in 'mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?' Ans.: 'Well you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented.' By redefining all people as 'people of color,' Walker universalizes what are typically seen as individual struggles while simultaneously allowing space for autonomous movements of self-determination (38).

Walker's "womanist" term follows the path of many feminists who promote a holistic-humanist approach in their political activism, critical writing, and daily lives. It appears to be a feminism of nurturing or creation, linked to the functions of maintaining lineage and family in social situation. As Larkin in "Black Women Filmmakers Defining Ourselves" and Collins in Black Feminist Thought have pointed out, not all women's feminism is identical. Not all black women want to align with the mainstream feminist movement. It initially appeared as if white feminists were asking black women to assail their men. This, black women understood, as assailing "their race," their very history. Feminism, to some black women, is not a separatist movement, but movement which addresses both men and women. Political activism is a means for "human empowerment rather than ends in and of themselves" (Collins 37).

The theme of variant feminisms arises in the discussion on a "women's cinema aesthetic" because black women directors have distinct patterns of aesthetics that other women do not regularly practice in their production practices. "Womanist" varies slightly from the "feminine"

in that it recognizes a political ideology. It's definitions suggest a claim that varies from the action and philosophy of feminists, who often impose a reverse oppression upon one's dominators, and fails to represent all women across difference. But with every naming, comes the eventual claim and ownership of ideology, language and philosophy. A question can be raised -- can white women be womanists? If not, then this identity falls into the same exclusivity and centrism that feminism does. Nevertheless, womanism forwards the notion of calling attention to domination to rethink its role in a more globally conscious and connected world. Inevitably domination is not useful. Cooperation appears to be the practice of womanists whose goals point toward a non-hegemonic world structure. My goals in this work align very much with womanist philosophy, but I write from the perspective of a woman of white color and consciously avoid it in the name of critical appropriation.

And so I approach this study with caution, realizing that feminism has many forms, variations and names. According to Gloria Gibson-Hudson, black women's feminism alone has included "womanist black feminism, Afrocentric feminism, Third World feminism, womynism, and African feminism" ("The Ties That Bind" 26-27). As well, other feminisms -- Marxist, liberal, radical, essentialist and others -- do exist. The early relationship of the academic feminist movement to the Euro-Anglo bourgeoisie is still remembered as repercussively divisive because all women's

voices were claimed as important, but in reality only white, educated women's texts and critical thinking was. Bell hooks writes that

Privileged feminists have largely been unable to speak to, with and for diverse groups of women because they either do not understand fully the inter-relatedness of sex, race, and class oppression or refuse to take this inter-relatedness seriously. Feminist analyses of woman's lot tend to focus exclusively on gender and do not provide a solid foundation of which to construct feminist theory. They reflect the dominant tendency in Western patriarchal minds to mystify woman's reality by insisting that gender is the sole determinant of woman's fate (Feminist Theory 14).

I use the term feminism in this study in part to bring it into question, and to include, where possible, different perspectives in this not yet inclusive term. Renaming analogous conceptual philosophies does nothing more than to create fissures based on other differences. So with the use of this term, I seek to include all persons that question dominant ideology and power structures. First by examining gender, then recognizing other means of domination and control, despite the contradictions, differences and identities within gender identity. I also wish to explore the activist position that feminists must continue to take in their filmmaking and critical discourse. A commitment to the politics of gender and other differences that result in domination and control of human beings is necessary for feminists. Hooks writes that:

Feminism is a struggle to end sexist oppression. Therefore, it is necessarily a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on

various levels as well as a commitment to reorganizing society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires...a commitment to feminism so defined would demand that each individual participant acquire a critical political consciousness based on ideas and beliefs (Feminist Theory 24).

I choose to use the word "feminist", knowing the problems associated with it as a word and its relation to sometimes elitist, racist and even sexist individuals within the social movement. I use the term to correct some of those problems. I use the term because of its association with female, both biologically determined and socially constructed. Feminism as a social and cultural construction needs room to expand. Merely renaming it is not as effective as exploring and reworking its philosophy, goals, and meanings.

Moving this discussion to the specifics of a "women's cinema" which employs a feminist aesthetic, mirrors much of the previous discussion. Judith Mayne suggests that at its core, "'women's cinema' challenges some of the basic links between cinema and patriarchy" (Women at the Keyhole 1-2). Claire Johnston echoes this by calling for an aesthetic to re-invent cinema from a women's perspective. Johnston calls for women to be producers of signification from within the classic Hollywood system. The study of these productive women, as a part of cinema history, is also paramount.

The tasks for feminist criticism must...consist of a process of de-naturalization: a questioning of the unity of the text; of seeing it as a contradictory interplay of different codes; of tracing its

'structuring absences'... Woman as signifier of woman under patriarchy is totally absent in most image-producing systems, but particularly in Hollywood where image-making and the fetishistic position of the spectator are highly developed. This is indeed why a study of 'woman' within the Hollywood system is of great interest ("Dorothy Arzner: Critical Strategies" 34).

Mayne provides two definitions of "women's cinema." First, "cinema made by women, and by women directors" can be considered women's cinema (2). In addition to the history-making directors previously mentioned, women filmmakers continue to work in and out of mainstream filmmaking in all forms -- such as the documentary work of Barbara Kopple, Ayoka Chenzira, and Christina Choy; the narrative work of Julie Dash, Yvonne Ranier, and Lizzie Borden; and the experimental films made by Trinh T. Minh-ha, Sally Potter and Su Friedrich. Recent popular successes based on national and international distribution include films made by women directors such as Jane Campion (who garnered only the second Academy Award Nomination for Best Director by a woman, for the 1993 The Piano), Penny Marshall, Penelope Spheeris, Gillian Armstrong, Nora Ephron, Martha Coolidge, and Amy Heckerling. This list is not exhaustive in any way and concentrates mainly on filmmakers from the United States or English speaking countries.¹² What is indicated is that there are many women working in filmmaking, and their primary place remains on the margins of mainstream image construction, even though they may work within the dominant system.

Bruckner suggests that cinema is a "place to focus on

our desires for particular images, to explore our own experiences of linguistics and visual absence, for we have always been made into images instead of acquiring our own" (121). She also reflects the importance of re-claiming signification as one's own. And this very personal style of feminist filmmaking is "not suitable for film cults or film buffs; they do not conjure up the atmosphere of the cinema, they are signposts along the path of the gradual liberation of individual and collective creativity" (Bruckner 122). Bruckner is not concerned with the box-office success of feminist films, but with their ability to express a feminist creative instinct. In regards to the feminist aesthetic, Bruckner suggests that this aesthetic is:

...the expression of the difficulty of combining seeing with feeling at a time when sight, the most abstract of all senses, has taken false objectification to extremes. But it is also the expression of a process, the goal of which is the force which first sets it in motion -- a feminist aesthetic...they are not portrayals of feminist insights however important these may be as supports; they are rather the meeting-place of a self-awareness located in the head, the stomach, and the knee, gained through visual experience (121-122).

Bruckner stresses the importance of emotive and process-centered elements in the feminist aesthetic.

Mayne's second criterion for a "women's cinema" understands the mainstream Hollywood production of cinematic pleasure for women that produced the "women's film" genre between the 1930s and 1950s. This genre, which itself includes many genres: melodrama, romance and women's social realism, still finds its characteristics present in recent

releases such as When a Man Loves a Woman (1994), Sleepless in Seattle (1993), The Joy Luck Club (1993), Boys on the Side (1995), The Making of an American Quilt (1995) and Waiting to Exhale (1995). In her early work, Molly Haskell criticized those kinds of films, writing that:

... 'the women's film' fills a masturbatory need, it is soft-core emotional porn for the frustrated housewife. The weepies are founded on a mock-aristotelian and politically conservative aesthetic whereby women spectators are moved, not by pity and fear but by self pity and tears, to accept, rather than reject, their lot. That there should be a need and an audience for such an opiate suggests an unholy amount of real misery. And that a term like 'woman's film' can be summarily used to dismiss certain films, with no further need on the part of the critic to make distinctions and explore the genre, suggests some of the reason for this misery (154-5).

This genre is indeed interesting considering that it does present images to women that can serve as potential alternatives for social roles and attitudes. The term "women's film" by patriarchal standards conjures up primarily negative images, not empowering ones. Haskell continues that the term "'women's film' carries the implication that women, and therefore women's emotional problems, are of minor significance" (154). Exploring a woman's cinema entails grappling with a past which has defined the term "woman" in a derogatory, sexist manner. On the surface, many of Hollywood's images of women are false and dangerous, but there are images we can recuperate for reinterpretation which are hopeful examples of women's representation. Mayne also calls on Bovenschen's concept of

the pre-aesthetic which is "concerned with a space, an area somehow prior to and therefore potentially resistant to the realm of the patriarchal symbolic" (Women at the Keyhole 202). Remove the 'patriarchal standards' from the 'standards of aesthetics' and a feminist poetic is revealed.

Claire Johnston also suggests that women's film needs to aesthetically counter the mainstream male dominated cinema. She asks feminist filmmakers to challenge the sexist nature of classic, realist storytelling. Whereas filmmakers in the modernist tradition, like Jean Luc Godard, worked for the deconstruction of classic realist cinema in the name of political aesthetics, Johnston wrote about it in the name of sexism. This counter cinema sought to break the illusionment of realist cinema through such formal devices as calling attention to the construction of film language, an essentially masculine language, and how viewers process that system of codes. Annette Kuhn added that "countercinema requires a departure from the pattern of climax and resolution or 'closure' established by classical narrative; distances the audience from the action by minimizing identification with characters; and rejects the presentation of a unified, coherent narrative in favor of radical narrative digressions and often disturbingly juxtaposed heterogeneous elements" (Women in Film 98). Counter cinema also established a self-referentiality, much like that of Bertolt Brecht's "distanciation and episodic structure" to move beyond the suspension of disbelief to the recognition of the creation of narratives and processes of

signification.

In feminist film or "women's cinema," deconstructing dominant forms of cinema is not the only area of work. Reflecting women's real experiences is also a priority. Moreover, developing a theory from which to talk about these empowering and often self-conscious film practices is necessary. The early feminist documentarists, whose primary concern was to represent women's lives, exemplified this. Rosenberg's work Women's Reflection: The Feminist Film Movement historically traces these early works in relation to the women's movement. These films and their creators' primary goals are best understood as content based (women's stories) and thus assume a political influence which aligns itself with the socialist documentary movement "making films about working people hitherto unrepresented on film" (Kuhn Women in Film 152). This focus on the real lives of women is aligned with sociological based feminist criticism and reflects a particular branch of feminist film practice. Byars suggests that these social documentarians and critics:

...faced charges of theoretical naivete, and sociological feminist film criticism [and filmmaking] was rapidly displaced from the mainstream of feminist film criticism and theory in the United States by an approach based in semiotics and psychoanalysis, a displacement that had already occurred within French film theory and within British feminist film theory (All That Hollywood Allows 26).

This move in film criticism and theory to a concentration on signification followed the line of thinking that content studies, or inquiry into films about women, was

a simplistic practice compared to the critical cinematic language of form and style in developing a counter cinema. But content and context need to be re-visited to understand a feministic generated narrative.

A different branch of feminist film practice focused solely on form, rather than content. Here, feminist cinema aligns itself with what had been the male dominated independent cinema or the avant garde movements. In this practice, aesthetic form was the level on which to challenge dominant cinema rather than on the level of content. This aesthetically grounded practice suggests that women filmmakers seek to develop new languages from which to speak (symbolically or otherwise) of women's experience on film. Like the social documentaries, women's stories are being told, but the methods employed to tell those stories are new and challenge dominant ways of narrative. This new aesthetic is seen in Chantal Akerman's Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai de Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles (1975), Sally Potter's Thriller (1979), Michelle Citron's Daughter Rite (1978), Zenaibu Irene Davis' Cycles (1989) and A Powerful Thang (1991), as well as in the experimental narrative work of Yvonne Ranier. Even films like Sara Gomez's One Way or Another/De cierta manera (1975-77), which breaks the dominant codes of documentary and fiction cinema, creates a new "feminist" language of sorts, albeit not necessarily a deliberately "feminine" one.

This discussion between form (discourse) and content (story) does not suggest that the two are distinctly

separate in their practice by feminists in developing a women's cinema. But content can begin to dictate particular forms, and form can alter how we interpret content. Women's cinema is continually reconstructing itself according to its own rules.

In Technologies of Gender, Teresa de Lauretis focuses two chapters on the discussion of a feminist cinema, "Strategies of Coherence: Narrative Cinema, Feminist Poetics and Yvonne Ranier" and "Rethinking Women's Cinema: Aesthetics and Feminist Theory" (107-148). The latter has been published in essay form in three anthologies which illustrates the significance of the question of feminist aesthetics to feminist film theory.¹³ In this work, de Lauretis forwards the notion of a feminist cinema that is a "critical reading of culture" (113) and that feminism has produced "a political-personal consciousness of gender as an ideological construct which defines the social subject" (114). A feminist film practice then will be conscious of how it constructs the experience of gendered "woman." Like the work of Bovenschen, de Lauretis suggests that a "feminist cinema is a notation for a process rather than an aesthetic or topological category" (115). Although de Lauretis points out that Bovenschen's discussion of the "pre-aesthetic" is still "couched in the terms of a traditional notion of art, specifically the one propounded by modernist aesthetics" (Multiple Voices 143). Using this dominant definition, art is consumed and "enjoyed publicly rather than privately, has an exchange-value rather than a

use-value, and that value is conferred by socially established aesthetic canons" (Multiple Voices 142). But the practice of a politics of image, where "questions of identification, self-definition, the modes or the very possibility of envisaging oneself as subject" is essential to feminists. These stylistically political codes are also important to male avant-garde filmmakers and theorists, as their work challenges "dominant representation...[and] hegemony" (de Lauretis Multiple Voices 142).

The practice of feminist cinema, notes de Lauretis, calls for "a process of reinterpretation and retextualization of cultural images and narratives whose strategies of coherence engage the spectator's identification through narrative and visual pleasure" (Technologies 115). De Lauretis seems to contradict herself here by not calling for a topology of cinema to explain feminist cinema, yet suggesting that the process is a [re]-imaging of something that already exists (that of patriarchal signification). This [re]-imaging then [re]-acts to the categorization, formal strategies and pleasures that have existed through classical narrative structures. But she also states that "spectatorship is pivotal to...a feminist cinema" (Technologies 119) and its "concern with address (whom the film addresses, to whom it speaks, what and for whom it seeks to represent, whom it represents) translates into a conscious effort to address the spectator as female, regardless of the gender of the viewer" (Technologies 119). Utilizing avant garde or counter

canonical techniques are relevant to a feminist cinema only if they call into question gendered subjectivity.

Feminist cinema...unlike other contemporary avant-garde, poststructuralist, or anti-humanist practices, begins from an understanding of spectatorship as gendered...and then essays to fashion narrative strategies, points of identification and places of the look that may address, engage, and construct the spectator as gendered subject...as a subject across racial as well as sexual difference (de Lauretis Technologies 123).

De Lauretis calls attention to the creation/production of gender by the "social technology" of film and asks if there is a distinct female gendered (or racial) coherence in the viewing experience. This question again takes into account both realms in which feminist filmmakers have been working - to develop consciousness-raising work about the images of women, and, in the rigorous formal work of the medium itself. In the former practice, film serves as a socio-political activist tool by giving women self-expression to narrate real/reel images of themselves. The latter stylistic practice asks that "the cinematic apparatus [be] understood as a social technology -- in order to analyze and disengage the ideological codes embedded in representation" (Multiple Voices 141).

De Lauretis' essay is deeply theoretical, falling victim itself to what she argues against in feminist cinema. Instead of placing women's cinema into a dominant canon, or counter-dominating, counter-canon, de Lauretis calls for a different way to envision women's cinema, through the address. Not locating a hierarchal set of standards in

which to discuss the work is as important as the creative work itself. But de Lauretis uses the languaging of the dominant system which she later calls attention to in Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema (1984). She moves deeply into the theoretical, something which certainly forwards knowledge in the area of discussion. Yet mired in theory, de Lauretis fails to account for the simplicity of a feminist aesthetic address -- "what does the film say to me? How does it talk to me as a woman?" The language of the master keeps us away from our real relationships with women's cinema. De Lauretis does conclude that feminism has invented new strategies and created new texts. It has also

...conceived a new social subject, women as speakers, writers, readers, spectators, users, and makers of cultural forms, shapers of cultural processes. The project of women's cinema, therefore, is no longer that of destroying or disrupting man-centered vision by representing its blind spots, its gaps, or its repressed. The effort and challenge now are how to effect another vision: to construct other objects and subjects of vision, and to formulate the conditions of representability of another social subject (Multiple Voices 148).

De Lauretis finally gives us examples of what women filmmakers are doing aesthetically by providing textual analysis of Chantal Akerman's Jeanne Dielman (1975), Lizzie Borden's Born in Flames (1983) and Yvonne Ranier's A Film About Women Who... (1974):

Through the disjunction of image and voice, the reworking of narrative space, the elaboration of strategies of address that alter the forms and balances of traditional representation. From the inscription of subjective space and duration inside the frame (a space of repetitions, silences and

discontinuities in Jeanne Dielman) to the construction of other discursive social spaces (the discontinuous but intersecting spaces of women's 'networks' in Born in Flames), women's cinema has undertaken a redefinition of both public and private space (Multiple Voices 158).

That personal (narrative voice) is political (commentative) suggests that the feminist aesthetic involves much more than stylistic elements. Yet, through narrative style we can discover underlying themes and the means women filmmakers use in re-claiming and re-visioning their own images. De Lauretis's final call for the "feminine aesthetic" is more of a "feminist de-aesthetic" (Multiple Voices 159). A feminist de-aesthetic gets us back to the use of narrative in everyday life -- to share stories about the past and construct personal and communal histories. As Julie Dash suggests, to create "mythic memories" for audiences (30) or to find a place for what Trinh Minh-ha, in Surname Viet Given Name Nam, calls "misfits of history" (Framer Framed 66).

Women of color and those writing about black filmmakers have contributed another angle to the discussion of a feminist aesthetic. It is in their scholarly exchange that we return to the theme(s), content and characters within film texts. Collectively, black filmmakers focus on the context of the black community, especially women's lives. This scholarship places significance on the socio-cultural history in which the film situates itself. In a recent Cineaste magazine, John Williams provides a filmography of

sixty-five black women independent film and video makers, and declares that "works by these women suggest an emerging aesthetic which might be considered as a 'black feminist' paradigm of films by, for and about black women" (38). Tracing the thematic elements in several films, Gloria Gibson-Hudson suggests that we can look to women's literature to find similar themes to study in women's films. "The two art forms, literature and film, have historically served as a forum calling for personal and societal introspection and activism...they have reflected and facilitated African Americans' struggle for self identity and acceptance" ("African American" 45). Borrowing from literary criticism, Gibson-Hudson suggests that films by African American women embrace several shared themes. The films usually include a "female-centered narrative, personal definition," some form of grounding in "socio-cultural history" and a common "film structure" ("African American" 45). Within these similarities, black women filmmakers communicate conceptually about issues relevant to their personal and communal lives. "They strive to communicate the effects of marginality and societal 'invisibility'" (46). Coming from personal experience, grounded in portrayals of history, films by black women, notes Gibson-Hudson, "start by considering structures that inform other African American art forms such as repetition, antiphony (call/response), the use of folklore, polyrhythmic and polyvisual structure" ("African American" 52). Kariamtu Welsh-Asante also notes similar stylistic techniques when

discussing African dance. Quoted in Asante's Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge, Welsh-Asante writes of the African aesthetic being comprised of seven aspects called senses. "These senses are (1) polyrhythm, (2) polycentrism, (3) dimensionality, (4) repetition, (5) curvilinear, (6) epic memory, and (7) wholism" (11). These aesthetic senses based in an Afrocentric philosophy, work in the areas of "art, plastic and performing" (11). Although Welsh-Asante applies these aesthetic senses to other art, their application also generates a new understanding of narrative construction and discursive engagement. What if these same principles were applied to women's films in narrative study? Asante defines the terms further:

Polyrhythm refers to the simultaneous occurrences of several major rhythms. Polycentrism suggests the presence of several colors in a painting or several movements on a dancer's body occurring in the context of a presentation of art. Dimensionality is spatial relationships and shows depth and energy, the awareness of vital force. Repetition is the recurring theme in a presentation of art. The recurrence is not necessarily an exact one but the theme or concept is presented as central to the work of art. Curvilinear means that the lines are curved in the art, dance, music, or poetry -- this is normally called indirection in the spoken or written art forms. Epic memory carries with it the idea that art contains the historic memory that allows the artist and audience to participate in the same celebration or pathos. Wholism is the unity of the collective parts of the art work despite the various unique aspects of the art (Asante 11-12).

In an interview with director Daresha Kyi, Jesse Rhines writes that "Kyi grounds her work in both Afrocentrism and humanism, and is reluctant to tailor her films for a

'crossover' audience." (43). This statement suggests the exclusivity of the Afrocentric discourse and that a film's narrative structure follows that path of distinctive address.

Filmmaker Alile Larkin declares that as long as feminism and progressive politics do not deal with the totality of oppressions (class, race, income) as well as gender, they too will fall victim to institutional racism. Tracing the history of black stereotypical characters in mainstream media, Larkin proposes, as a black women filmmaker, that her primary goal is to contribute to the development of "our own definitions" (158) because Hollywood and other media present distorted and limited definitions/possibilities of black life. Larkin, along with other feminist filmmakers, are reclaiming their own images from a Hollywood that "has the power to rewrite, redefine and recreate history, culture, religion and politics" (157). A black feminist aesthetic has the "never ending task of countering the negative images, the subliminally racist images that continue to flow from the commercial industry" (168), thus they rewrite and correct damaging stereotypes. In an effort to heal and unite her community, Larkin writes that she works from an historical approach. Films by black women have "rooted and aware characters who live in the real world" (172). "We create with the understanding that our humanity is not a given in this society. A primary struggle in our work is to recapture our humanity" (Larkin 172). This echoes Gibson-Hudson's view of black women's centrality

to the narrative, specifically for purposes of self-affirmation, self-perception, self-awareness and psychological maturation.

Gibson-Hudson continues her discussion of the black female aesthetic in "Aspects of Black Feminist Cultural Ideology in Films by Black Women Independent Artists" (1994). In this essay she suggests that black women's artworks draw from their lives and "promote exploration of self, attack racial polarity, instill racial and female pride, and encourage individual and collective activism" (365). In this argument Gibson-Hudson forwards the notion that contextuality affects the aesthetic form of a film, that films function within a cultural ideology "to communicate aspects of African-American female sociocultural identity" (365) and that audiences are reflective and often transformed because of these images.

Gibson-Hudson illustrates the importance of combining a textual analysis with the socio-cultural-historical background in which the film was created and received. Black women's aesthetics move the argument about aesthetics back into the practical from the deeply theoretical. The critics remember a basic function of film -- to recount one's own stories and history, and to present these stories to audiences.

Gibson-Hudson's aesthetic suggestions cross over to other women filmmakers, although their work is also influenced by specific cultural and ideological themes. For example, I will draw on critical writing by Trinh. T. Minh-

ha (1989, 1991, 1992) as well as the work of Third film scholars like Teshome Gabriel (1989), Paul Willeman and Jim Pines (1989) who contribute to the discussion of "other" women of color, their aesthetic choices and visual cultural artifacts.

With this ongoing question of a "women's cinema" we recognize the importance of difference among women. But the questions remains, how are we to watch, analyze and discuss this cinema, as well as the meaning it has as a creator of cultural images and beliefs? I illustrated earlier how feminist film scholars and activists had been using several approaches. Historical studies, representational studies of women's roles, and thematic/content analysis have been a part of feminist film enquiry. Analytic methods such as structuralism through the employment of psychoanalysis and semiotics, personal manifestos on feminist cinema practice, and cultural studies have all been used to examine difference in terms of women's film production and reception. One area that still needs further exploration is narrative theory. It appears that feminists have ignored narratology as much as narratologists have eluded the feminist question of gender. Integrating a narratological model with the perspectives of feminist aesthetics, and providing specific textual analysis (across difference) will allow for the development of a feminist oriented narratology. A connection between these two differing modes of critical discourse and methodological approaches contributes further understanding in how women's films can

be analyzed, what qualities a feminist aesthetic employs and how filmic structure might communicate a gendered perspective regardless of the filmmaker's gender.

NOTES

1. In All That Hollywood Allows: Rereading Gender in 1950s Melodrama Jackie Byars provides an historical summation of feminist film criticism and theory, noting the tension that exists between theory and production (context). She writes that because of this, "the distinction between the discursive subject and social-historical subject has proved especially problematic" (31). Thus her study includes an understanding of the ideological base in textual analysis.

2. The existence of a feminist film criticism and theory canon includes such works as Jackie Byars All that Hollywood Allows: Rereading Gender in 1950s Melodrama (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 1991); Charlotte Brunson, Films for Women (London: British Film Institute, 1986); Teresa de Lauretis, Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) and Alice Doesn't Feminism, Semiotics and Cinema (Indiana University Press, 1984); Mary Ann Doane, The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1987); Lucy Fisher, Shot/Countershot: Film Tradition and Women's Cinema (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Christine Gledhill ed. Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film (London: British Film Institute, 1987); Claire Johnston, Notes on Women's Cinema (London: Society for Education in Film and Television, 1973) and Dorothy Arzner (1975); E. Ann Kaplan, Women & Film (1983); Annette Kuhn, Women in Film (1990); Tania Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory (New York: Methuen, 1988); Constance Penley, ed. Feminist Film Theory (New York: Methuen, 1988) and the Future of an Illusions: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Patrice Petro, "Feminism and Film History," Camera Obscura; Deidre Pribram, ed. Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television (New York: Verso, 1988); and Kaja Silverman, The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

3. Other examples of feminist and psychoanalysis include Tania Modleski's "Never to Be Thirty-Six Years Old: Rebecca as Female Oedipal Drama"; Linda Williams' "Something Else Besides a Mother: Stella Dallas and the Maternal Melodrama"; and Tania Modleski's "Time and Desire in Women's Film".

4. For example see Gloria Gibson-Hudson's "African American Literary Criticism as A Model for the Analysis of Films by African American Women." Wide Angle 13.1-4: 45-54; Gibson-Hudson, "Black Feminist Cultural Ideology." Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism, eds. Carson et al. 365-379; John Williams, "Two Generations of Black Women Filmmakers." Cineaste. 20.3 (1994): 38-44; Alile Sharon Larkin, "Black

Women Film-makers Defining Ourselves: Feminism in Our Own Voices." Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television, ed. Pribram 157-173.

5. See also Edward Said. The World, The Text, The Critic. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1983, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty et al. Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991, for discussion of the role of criticism and activism.

6. In a class I facilitated at Michigan State University in 1995 and 1996 titled "Minorities in Mass Media," a common discussion among students of color was how they both associated with their racial ancestry, but were recipients of racism within their racial group. Light skinned black students often talked about being teased for being white and college students often talked about how non-college blacks felt they were trying to "act white" if they spoke something other than urban black English.

7. Other feminists currently working in areas of racial representation in film and the aesthetics of difference are Gina Marchetti, Ana Lopez, Esther C.M. Yau, Poonam Arora, Julianne Burton-Carvajal, Gloria Gibson-Hudson, Linda Dittmar, Amy Lawrence, and Elizabeth Hadley Freydberg who all have essays in the 1994 collection Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism. Also see Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media (1994). All of the authors, along with those others not mentioned, have added to the collection of scholarship in the areas of feminism, film and television, and diasporic or Third Cinema cultures. The above listed anthology also has an extensive bibliography, distribution lists, and course files/syllabi on women and film. The readings outside of the early European feminist critical work are available, yet more work certainly needs to be done in this area, especially resurrecting the histories of women in marginalized countries and their methods of film production, often done in collectives like the Cine Mujer who produced and directed Carmen Carrascal (1982) in Columbia or even the work from Studio D (National Film Board) in Canada.

8. When I made a formal presentation of the material in this dissertation to a faculty group at a large midwestern university, one faculty member who was focused on technical "training" of students for job placement asked if there was a point to all of this theoretical work if the films did not have national distribution. It is clear that many individuals only feel that mainstream film and video are worth our attention. I wonder if any of this instructor's student had the invitation to express themselves outside of mainstream techniques, narrative forms or styles?

9. Other literary anthologies that discuss women, men and language including Deborah Cameron, ed. The Feminist Critique of Language (New York: Routledge, 1990); Jennifer Coates, Women, Men and Language (London: Longman, 1986); Toril Moi, The Kristeva Reader (New York: Columbia UP, 1986); Susan Rubin Suleiman, The Female Body in Western Culture (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986); Elaine Showalter, The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory (New York: Pantheon, 1985); Catherine Belsey, The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989); Marianne Hirsh and Evelyn Fox Keller, Conflicts in Feminist (New York: Routledge, 1990); Mary Eagleton, Ed. Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

10. The concept of "making strange" comes from the article "Dorothy Arzner: Critical Strategies" by Claire Johnston in Feminism and Film Theory, ed. Constance Penley, (New York: Routledge, 1988) pg. 41. Johnston uses Russian Formalist Victor Shklovsky's term "ostranenie," the device of making strange. This device, to Johnston, is a "key strategy by means of which the discourse of the woman subverts and dislocates the dominant discourse of the man and patriarchal ideology in general" (41). This concept is also explained by Christine Gledhill in two articles: "Developments in Feminist Film Criticism," in Revision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism. eds. Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp, and Linda Williams. (Frederick: UP of America, 1984); and "Klute 1: A Contemporary Film Noir and Feminist Cinema," in Women in Film Noir. ed. E. Ann Kaplan. (London: British Film Institute, 1984).

11. Epistemic distancing, according to Shrage, was termed by George Wilson to "refer to the extent our ordinary beliefs about the world and about film are helpful to us in understanding a particular film" (Aesthetic in Feminist Perspective 142n) from (George Wilson, Narration in Light: studies in Cinematic Point of View, Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1986). In epistemic distancing, audiences suspend common sense beliefs in the film viewing instance, much like the techniques of direct address in the films of Woody Allen or even Yvonne Rainer. Genre rules might also be thwarted as an example of this distancing. Shrage uses the example of Jim Jarmusch's Stranger Than Paradise (1984) "because it violates the assumption that something interesting should happen in the first hour or so of the film" (Aesthetics in Feminist Perspective 142).

12. For an encyclopedic guide on women's film see Women and Film: An International Guide Eds. Annette Kuhn and Susannah Radstone, New York: Fawcett, 1990. This book really begs for updating every several years especially with the increase in production by women of diaspora cultures and co-cultures living in the United States. For native women's films refer to Native Americans on Film and Video. Volume

II. eds. Elizabeth Weatherford and Emelia Seubert. New York: Museum of the American Indian, 1988.

13. See Issues on Feminist Film Criticism, ed. Erens (1990), Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television, ed. Pribram (1988) and Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism, eds. Carson et al. (1994).

CHAPTER THREE

CINEMATIC NARRATOLOGY AND CONSIDERATION OF A FEMINISTIC PERSPECTIVE

The (Her) Story with no Beginning and No End: Meaning in Women's Narrative

The study of language and narrative is ubiquitous among diverse disciplines because the telling of stories is as much a part of our social fabric as communication itself. Works in narrative theory illustrate the influence and scope of narrative, from studies in language and linguistics (Barthes 1964; Chomsky 1957, 1975; Derrida 1976; Eco 1986) to human communication and rhetorical criticism (Fisher 1984, 1987; Kirkwood 1992; Ettema & Glasser 1988), and historical research and writing (White 1984, 1987). Attention to narrative in literary studies and dramatic arts dates back to Aristotle's Poetics. Thus, the study of narrative has illustrated its longevity.

Recent literary criticism, influenced by feminism, has focused on women's narrative and language theory (Cameron 1990; Felski 1989; Eagleton 1986; Benstock 1987; Showalter 1984, 1985). Narrative and gender difference theory has also generated interest for media studies scholars in television studies (Kozloff 1992; VandeBerg 1991), cinema (Byars, 1991; de Lauretis 1984, 1987; Mellencamp 1990) and in studies of emerging technologies like multimedia, video installation and camcorder production. ¹

Narrative studies, according to Gerald Prince, allow us to "investigate compositional and representational

practices" in film and art, in "cultural analysis, to trace the ways in which various forms of power legitimate themselves" and in psychology, "to explore memory and comprehension" ("On Narratology" 1).

Despite the long history of studies in language and narrative, it was only within the last two decades that a linguistic model of narrative analysis was applied to cinema, using the structural semiotics foundation of language.² And this has been a limited agenda for cinema scholars. As a text based analysis, narrative criticism is useful in distinguishing between different cinematic texts and in locating markers within individual texts which communicate story material and arrangement of the story, or its discursive nature. According to Ansgar Nünning, "the knowledge interests of narratology regardless of whether it is of a structuralistic or post-structuralistic providence is primarily of a theoretical and taxonomical nature" (103). Narratology is the "science" of narrative structure. This commonly accepted posture, however, assumes that men and women are equally represented in the symbolic order, process, and function of language. Narratological studies up to now also assumes that this equal and timeless representation is reflected in cinema. Teresa de Lauretis writes of women's place in language and cinema as being

One of non-coherence; she finds herself only in a void of meaning, the empty space between the signs -- the place of women spectators in the cinema between the look of the camera and the image on the screen, a place not represented, not symbolized and thus preempted to subject (or self) representation

(Alice Doesn't 8).

And so working within the confines of the narratologists' language and in a symbolic order that recognizes only women's absence, I seek, like de Lauretis, to find a narration of, and for, women. Narratology can prove to be a useful tool to analyze women's cinematic texts and to distinguish between men's and women's films, but only if it is modified to consider gender and other social, cultural and historical differences.

Narratology has not paid much attention to the category of gender, while feminists have chosen not to "support their interpretations and thesis by reverting back to precise narrative theoretical categories" (Nünning 103). Nünning writes that

Feministic studies are based on social, critical and ideological considerations and try to, by the way of interpretation of specific texts, uncover the social discrimination of women and to work toward a change of the existing relationships. The efforts of narrative theory is geared toward a systematic, model building, and rational description of text structures by means of a clear metalanguage relationship framework, while in feministic studies, literature or literary history, interpretative questions are in the foreground (103).

Both feminism and narratology can benefit from an alliance of their particular foci of inquiry. Procedures of textual criticism need to consider gender difference, especially when considering women's film. De Lauretis writes about feminist criticism, theory, and women's cinema that "what is finally at stake is not so much how 'to make visible the

invisible' as how to produce the conditions of visibility for a different social subject" (9). A feminist narrative model draws on theoretical positions of the past because they have not yet questioned gender difference. And there is no way to work outside of that (up to now) patriarchal based language structure if I am to question it from the inside and extend its applicability.

Defining narrative is one place to begin. Robert Burgoyne synthesizes various definitions of narrative from the work of several theorists as "the recounting of two or more events (or a situation and an event) that are logically connected, occur over time and are linked by a consistent subject into a whole" (Stam et al. Recent Theories 69). But as Gerald Prince notes, narrative "does not simply record events; it constitutes and interprets them as meaningful parts of meaningful wholes, whether the latter are situations, practices, persons or societies" ("On Narratology" 1). Narrative functions in assisting human beings to organize time and the phenomena of knowing, "as etymology suggests (the term narrative is related to the Latin GNARUS), it also represents a particular mode of knowledge. It does not simply mirror what happens; it explores and devises what can happen" (Prince Dictionary 60). Narrative thus provides a rhetorical and interpretive function in language according to Prince ("On Narratology" 11) and Seymour Chatman (1978; 1990). Because narratology has traditionally been a descriptive method of analysis, adding the interpretative element of a feministic

perspective will expand the knowledge of narrative(s) across gender difference. Nünning comments that "a feministically orientated narratology connects analytical, rational knowledge interests with cultural and historical study in that it puts the primary attention on the aesthetic order and the narrative arrangement of themes and contents" (105).³ It is necessary to modify both the theoretical and methodical premises of narratology and feminism.

In addition to considering gender difference, narratology should also incorporate the influence of other differences like race, nation or culture into narrative structural inquiry. Feminist film theory and criticism, as a cultural-ideological perspective, has not yet significantly influenced narrative film studies, but can be a starting point for other branches of narrative and difference studies. This work centralizes gender while also considering race and ethnicity of the filmmakers.

Theoretical neglect of gender as a contingency of textual variance exists for the same reason that I struggle with in this project. Recognizing the social role of gender illuminates the problem of critical writing. It is performed within an arbitrary language structure, one that has few theories for recognizing the presence of women and other marginalized people. Developing any kind of systematic method with which to analyze text structure and meaning requires using that very language which also has served to negate the presence of particular persons. Quoting Ruby Rich, de Lauretis writes of the difficulty, but

absolute necessity of locating alternative subject(s) in narrative and non-narrative as part of the feminist intervention.

According to [Laura] Mulvey, the woman is not visible in the audience which is perceived as male; according to [Claire] Johnston, the woman is not visible on the screen...How does one formulate an understanding of a structure that insists on our absence even in the face of our presence? What is there in a film with which a woman viewer identifies? How can the contradictions be used as a critique? And how do all these factors influence what one makes as a woman filmmaker, or specifically as a feminist filmmaker (Alice Doesn't 29, Rich Women and Film 87).⁴

So the feminist agenda in narrative studies requires that we "open up critical spaces in the seamless narrative space constructed by dominant cinema and by dominant discourses," writes de Lauretis (29). For narratologists, this work is a project of considering different narrative spaces of expression for different social subjects. For feminists, it is an ongoing experiment of working with the paradox of structure and taxonomy of language. Feminist critics have resisted the dissection of their aesthetics as if they were only made up of "paradoxes, images, symbols" (Nünning 104). For feminists it is also the continuing project of historical, cultural, social and contextual consideration in creative production.

Woman as Social Subject: The Significance of a Feminist-Narrative Critical Methodology

Studies in a feministically oriented film narratology have been disturbingly sparse, although this is a rich area

in literary scholarship. Ruth Ginsburg's "In Pursuit of Self: Theme, Narration, and Focalization in Christina Wolf's Patterns of Childhood" (1992) and "Oppositional Practices in Women's Traditional Narrative" by Marie Maclean (1987) call attention to thematic elements in narrative discourse and point of view in women's literature. Robin Warhol (1986, 1989) also considers cross gendered narration in early Victorian novels. Nünning writes that "a feminist orientated narrative study makes clear that forms and functions of cross gendered narrative only come into view when the question of the gender of narrative instances is introduced as a relevant category of investigation" (107).

There have been a few attempts to formulate a model for the narrative category -- tense -- in literature. The works of Gayle Greene in "Feminist Fiction and the Uses of Memory" (1991), "Timely Considerations: Temporality and Gender in La Fin de Cheri by Lezlie Hart Stivale (1991), and "Women's Time" by Julia Kristeva (1981) try to establish that women's experiences of time are different from male orientation. Nünning suggests that "time formulation in women's novels whose fragmentary discontinuous and cyclical ordering of the story often does away with the appearance of linearly teleology" (106). The same applies for women's filmmaking which will be shown in the following chapters. Narrative order is circular and rhythmic rather than organized in a linear, cause-effect fashion. ⁵

In 1983, Tania Modleski examined the temporality of television reception in "The Rhythms of Reception: Daytime

Television and Women's Work." This research suggests that time is perceived, used, and defined differently for men and women. Moreover, concepts of time relate to one's work or daily routine. Modleski examines how women's domestic work schedules related to their consumption of television, especially soap operas, with their repetitive, serialized and cyclical structure. Lynn Spigel (1994) in "Women's Work" also examines temporality and human activity. Her study focuses on comparing domestic space, which is mainly occupied by women, with public space, occupied by men. These spatial orientations are then compared to television usage and the way "TV watching fits into a general pattern of everyday life where work and leisure are intertwined" (20). Spigel notes that "women's leisure time was shown to be coterminous with their work time. Representations of television continually addressed women as housewives and presented them with a notion of spectatorship that was inextricably intertwined with their useful labor at home" (21).

Regardless of these noteworthy pieces of criticism in narrative studies, only Susan Lanser (1986, 1988, 1992), Nilli Diengott (1988) -- in a rebuttal to Lanser's article -- and Robin Warhol (1986, 1989) have even used the term "feminist narratology" or directly addressed the notion of a feminist poetics in literary criticism by connecting narratology with a feminist perspective. Some film critics do examine feminism and narrative, but have not yet associated it with the structuralist field of narratology. ⁶

Warhol, in Gendered Interventions, Narrative Discourse in the Victorian Novel (1989), notes that "feminist critics have shown little interest in narratology and that those who have undertaken narratological analyses concentrate almost exclusively on the 'level of story.' Warhol contends that the 'level of discourse' can 'help describe such differences [between the structures of men's and women's texts] which would be the first step in developing a poetics of gendered discourse'" (Hart Stivale 367n from Warhol 15). The most recent essay on feminist narratology is by Ansgar Nünning (1995) who reviews the earlier writings by feminist narratologists and continues to forward the usefulness of a "feministically orientated narratology" (102). The author discusses the importance of feminist literary criticism and narratology, suggesting that "despite their contrary theoretical and methodological assumptions, are not as incompatible as the fact that the practitioners of the two approaches tend to ignore each other's work" (102). Nünning echoes Warhol's assertion that "feminist works concern themselves much more with the 'what' than with the 'how.' Their interests lies less in the structural or narrative technical questions than in the contents portrayal of women characters: their development and identity problems" (104). This mirrors the critical history of feminist cinema scholarship. Scholars either studied women's roles and stereotypical portrayals in comparison to the social, cultural, and historical situations in which the films were produced, or they studied the film's structure, meaning and

reception through psychoanalytic or structuralist models.

"If feminist works neglect narrative technical considerations, then narrative theory usually excludes the contents of the work as well as the question of the contextual and reality relationship of narrative texts" (Nünning 104). Nünning's revisitiation of the work by Lanser and Warhol supports that an interpretive/contextual approach allies effectively with an analytical, descriptive and taxonomical methodology.

Lanser (1986, 1989) directly addresses how gender affects narrative construction, narrative reading and textual analysis while naming both narratology and feminism as useful methods of inquiry.⁷ She writes that "narratology has had little impact on feminist scholarship, and feminist insights about narrative have been similarly overlooked by narratology" (341). Winnett (1990) adds that when scholars were constructing the original precepts of narratology, "masculine [and first world, Western, Bourgeoisie] text stands for the universal text" (Lanser 343).⁸ Furthermore, and of central importance to this dissertation, no one has previously named feminist narratology as a method of critical and theoretical inquiry for cinema scholars, although a strong [male text dominated] tradition now exists in this area which tends to ignore gender.

This dissertation is only the beginning of the critical and theoretical work that can be done in feministically oriented narrative studies. It is my hope that this writing

will provoke a reexamination of narratology when considering films by women and other traditionally marginalized persons who bring different experiences and modes of expression to the art form. It is also a new method offered to scholars engaged in gender and image studies. Initiating a conversation about discursive patterns, forms and devices used by filmmakers serves in understanding how the narration of plot events influence or indicate culture based thematic structuring and feminist or gendered commentary.

Lanser's (1986, 1992) suggestion for a feminist narratology centralizes the concepts of voice, context of writing, and definitions of plot and story in understanding the meaning in women's narrative. She does not name her focus "gendered narration", but uses women's texts to illustrate her points of narrative (mis)understanding and (mis)reading. "Through looking together at narrative processes, literary conditions of production, and social ideology Lanser shows...that narrative forms do not portray timeless ideal types but rather are historically determined" (Nünning 111). Like Lanser's writing, a feministic oriented cinematic narratology can also focus on films by women which are centered on female characters as the primary narrators who provide the narrative voices in the text. In addition, focusing part of this study on production context offers a valuable framework for examining specific narrative texts produced at specific times for ideological and cultural purposes.

Literary studies assist in developing a cinematic

narrative theory. However, because the medium of cinema is different from literature, further scholarship is needed to develop a language and model of narrative which includes consideration of cinema's visual and auditory cues, its unique temporal elements and the nature of production collaboration. In fact, Lanser and Warhol omit consideration of temporality from their studies of feminist narration by both focusing on the category of narrative voice. Cinema scholarship in feminism and narrative is still an open area for (r)evolution. This area of scholarship does not have to be limited to films by women directors, as I do with this particular study. It has the potential to examine all forms of gendered address, and cross-gendered address, including, for example, films such as the 1996 independently produced Girls Town by Jim McKay and Welcome to the Dollhouse by director Todd Solondz. These directors cross gender lines by presenting what Pulse (June 1996) calls "sensitive depictions of young women and the situations of their lives." These films follow the trend of cross gender representation like Muriel's Wedding (C.P. Hogan) and the 1993 released Ruby in Paradise (Victor Nunez).

Utilizing two divergent perspectives of analysis -- narratology and feminism -- suggests an alliance between two theoretical positions which are inherently oppositional, "the one scientific, descriptive, and non-ideological, the other impressionistic, evaluative and political" (Lanser 341). But in order to locate and appreciate the

possibilities of pluri-narrative forms or techniques, those based on cultural, ethnic, or gendered difference, we need to use the insights of a pluri-methodology. Nünning writes that "the sketched alliance of the two approaches promises with this not only a gain of analytical precision for feminist studies but also it opens up for narratology many new cultural, historically relevant ways of looking at problems and perspectives" (117).

One project of feminists has been an historical recovery project -- to reconnect authors or filmmakers to their work, to recognize the importance of the filmmaker's gender and modes of address, and to locate inscriptions of resistance to patriarchal structures in these filmmaker's work and in cinema in general. Women must claim at least half of the center of the cinematic apparatus and the theories of auteurship cannot fade now that women are actively writing, directing and distributing films in great numbers. My effort in this recovery project is not just about history, although one goal of this project is to call these women filmmaker's work into mainstream recognition. It is about theoretical practice which needs to be continually questioned and reformulated to consider mobility or positioning in theory. This argument is supported by the notion of what Donna Haraway calls "situated knowledges" (188), where the positioning of theory is flexible, where knowledge is localized and connected through webbed accounts to the body of other knowledges, not to one finite and unified master theory (Haraway 194). We can use the

metaphor of the web or bridge in cinematic theoretical discourse instead of the pyramid where all texts fall under one or several guiding principles or models of narration. ⁹

Feminism can be a perspective that bridges a web with the methods of narratology to assist in several important areas of understanding cinematic narrative. First, it is a means to understand gender difference in narrative poetics. This also invites consideration of other kinds of differences that may be at work in the construction and recounting of narrative events. A feministic narratology suggests an examination of the language with which we speak of, and about, cinema. We may need to examine and consider that various language(s) are necessary to represent different cinema(s), especially the cinema considered here - - films by women of color. Up to now, gender or other modes of difference have not been adequately considered in the development of narrative theory. Placing gender at the center of narrative inquiry resists the idea of a master narrative with which to compare or adjudicate all texts. Centering difference and developing a new feminist poetics also illustrates how narrative analysis in feminist filmmaking practices elucidates connections in women's narration and facilitates the explication of discursive similarities and differences across race, ethnicity, form and style of these women.

Secondly, through a feministic oriented narratology, we can study "women's cinema," not only films made by women directors, writers or photographers but those which situate

women at the center of the narration. A feminist narratology focuses on films which are centered on female characters who are the primary narrators "giving voice" to the text. Feminist narratology recognizes women directors and/or texts which centralize women's culture.

By examining gender and narrative in cinema we can also understand how narrative structure and address can be considered as "gendered" through analyzing the specific elements of narratology: tense, focalization (point of view) and voice but from different social spaces, that of woman's space (an arbitrary and contradictory phrase itself). By studying different narrative structures based on gender, we can elucidate the concepts of gendered address and gendered reading. Films can locate gender difference at their center for critical, ideological, and historical purposes. A feminist narratology will assist in the critical analysis of these films and provide methods for understanding their reception by different audiences. And, as a result, certain cinematic techniques are more feminist than others. This is to say that some techniques are used for specific political/(anti)ideological reasons to question traditional dominant patriarchal methods, forms and styles in filmmaking practices.

This work itself ruptures open a space in the dominant discourses of narratology and capitalist/mainstream cinema (with its particular economic distinctions of value). In this role, the research serves as theoretical activism, questioning the dominant models of narrative theory and

methods of criticism by using traditionally marginalized filmmaker's texts to develop new procedures of critical analysis.

Moreover, this bridging of theoretical approaches illuminates the importance of the historical production context in the creation of narrative. Social, historical, linguistic, cultural, political and personal/biographical elements surely need to be considered when examining gender and cinematic narrative construction. Meaning in the filmic text also comes from beyond the text, from women's life experiences that have not been portrayed accurately if at all through the celluloid storyteller.

Although this study focuses on women filmmakers to locate a gendered narrative and narrativity, the notions of gendered address or gendered text do not fall exclusively into the filmmaking practices of women. It is the parameter used in this study so that consideration of a gender oriented narratology will open new vistas for film analysis.

This dissertation examines textual structure, themes, and cinematic techniques simultaneously from two points of view: (1) the text as a product of some authorial influence and the subsequent story/film material -- its narration -- and (2) the text as "read" by some audience member(s) --its narratee(s) -- who inscribe some gendered cultural, social, and historical meanings to it. The feminist film form considers new methods of seeing and structuring visual media as well as reading/understanding that media. This work considers both the comparison of women's narrative

strategies and also potential ways to access those texts.

Prince adds that:

...narratological description can not only help to account for the uniqueness of any given narrative, to compare any two (sets of) narratives, and to institute narrative classes according to narratively pertinent features, but it can also help to account for certain responses to the text ("On Narratology" 3).

And as de Lauretis points out, a feminist aesthetic is dependent on spectatorship, even consciousness of the gendered address, and also "the making and the working of narrative, its construction, and its effects of meaning" (Alice Doesn't 10). ¹⁰

Every aesthetic film form and its subsequent meanings are arbitrary, much like language itself. Meanings vacillate and lie somewhere in the negotiation between the filmmaker and the many audiences she attempts to narrate to. Meaning is inscribed within these [gendered] texts and their different structures. There are points of recognition, where a viewer identifies with the narrative address. These are potential instances of story recognition by the narratees. Echoing this, de Lauretis notes that there is difficulty locating meaning or representation in the technologically and socially constructed medium of film. Drawing on the work of Steven Heath, she writes that "the problem is, rather, that meanings are not produced in a particular film but 'circulate between social formation, spectator and film.' The production of meanings...always involves not simply a specific apparatus of representation

but several," (i.e. social, economic, technological, etc.) (32). With the arbitrariness of cinematic meaning it seems increasingly relevant to develop a flexible, yet effective methodological framework which combines the various elements of context, structure, content, and arrangement.

The Master's Language: Narrative as Male Construction and Pleasure

An introduction to narrative form, specifically what has been called the "master narrative(s)" by feminists, should be discussed before laying out the methodological definitions and history of narratology as it applies to this feminist study. The master narrative form (which ironically is the very history and methodology I must work within throughout the following pages) is most often identified as a Western, masculine narrative. This narrative form has historically assumed many roles, from anthropological discourse in the "explanation" of a colonized people or nation, in political and ideological discourse, and in literary and cinematic criticism. This work is interested in how the master narrative relates to the classical Hollywood fiction form. The earlier discussion on feminist aesthetics assumed this mainstream structure as a standard by which other aesthetic forms or narratives have been measured. As the author of this critical work, I recognize that I have been socialized into accepting the mainstream, classical (and patriarchal) form as a standard framework from which to measure all other forms. This is the style I

learned in my educational background -- creative writing, languages/grammar, dramatic writing, speech and oratory, and introductory film and video production classes. I also have learned this structure because of its pervasive presence in Western popular culture so I also recognize that I do not stand alone in this socialization. But what is the history of the classical form and what are some of its characteristics? These answers may then lead us to understand why feminists have made the dismantling of this form a primary goal, and why a feminist narratology is relevant in cinematic studies.

David Bordwell (1985) provides a useful summation of the classical narrative form. ¹¹ Beginning his argument by setting out the ways to study narrative, Bordwell writes that narrative can be seen as "representation, how it refers to or signifies a world or body of ideas" (17). Secondly, narrative can be examined as a "structure, the way its components combine to create a distinctive whole" and finally narrative can be studied as "an act, a dynamic process of presenting a story to a perceiver" (17). This final area considers the elements of temporality, narration (voice) and point of view or focalization, as well as the source, function and effect of the text. All of these components seem to suggest that for a text to be considered a narrative, it has to in some way achieve unity, through action, and provide for believability (at least mimesis) in its representation of a complete story world. Bordwell goes on to define classical Hollywood narrative as a system that

has a particular logic, and that logic has become normalized in Western culture, forming a "model" story form. He also suggests that in "classical fabula (story) construction, causality is the prime unifying principle" (19). This design recognizes narrative as a cause-effect, goal oriented, and linear structure. Causality is also seen to motivate "temporal principles of organization" (19), through a series of climaxes and resolutions, to some end or closing point.

Classical Hollywood narration also provides continuity between and within scenes and sequences. Bordwell suggests that "unity of time (continuous or consistently intermittent duration), space (a definable locale), and action (a distinct cause-effect phase)" assist in this process of continuity (20). Examples of common cinematic techniques include fades to black or white to suggest the ending of a scene or change of locale, dissolves to suggest relationships between scenes, wipes to suggest simultaneous action or changes in locale, and a classical style of editing which "aims at making each shot the logical outcome of its predecessor and at reorienting the spectator through repeated setups. Momentary disorientation is permissible only if motivated realistically" (27). With the assistance of cinematic techniques, now normalized among audiences, filmmakers, and film school instruction, the cinematic characters, scenes and sequences we see move onward to some goal, deadline or outcome. "At least one line of action must be left suspended, in order to motivate the shifts to

the next scene, which picks up the suspended line" (20). Bordwell offers that "instead of a complex braiding of causal lines (as in Rivette) or an abrupt breaking of them (as in Antonioni, Godard, or Bresson), the classical Hollywood film spins them out in smooth, careful linearity" (21). Most of the mainstream theatrical releases follow this "safe" and seemingly logical-rational format for storytelling.

In regards to cinematic narration, "the classical narration tends to be omniscient, highly communicative, and only moderately self-conscious" (22). This omnipresent form suggests a singular (usually male) spectator, something feminist film critics have reacted to. The most notable example is Laura Mulvey's 1975 article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Bordwell notes that "the camera" becomes the "ideal invisible observer," (24) and feminists have named this observer/voyeur as a European (white), heterosexual male. Simply trace the damaging stereotypical, and often one-dimensional, representation of marginalized groups including and acutely (in)visible -- women -- to find the visible patriarchal spectator addressed through classical narration.

This method of narration appears very unconscious in its operation. The idea of invisibility (called continuity) is of utmost importance in the classical style. We see this in the phrases "invisible editing" or "dramatic continuity". Comparing this to art cinema or even some modes of documentary (the interactive or reflexive modes of Trinh T.

Minh-ha), Bordwell might argue that "the viewer concentrates on constructing the fabula [story], not on asking why the narration is representing the fabula in this particular way" (25).¹² Yet films are not only produced to present "stories." The classical system of narration appears ordinary -- even mundane when one is exposed to other kinds of narratorial styles and generic forms. However, Bordwell does propose that this kind of cinema still requires some form of engagement by the spectator, who "constructs form and meaning according to a process of knowledge, memory, and inference" (32). It is just that this "given" knowledge, memory, and inference is based on a sexist model, recognizing male orientation to the world and story structure, rather than the female perspective.

The most problematic area of this narrative logic is that it appears as the primary way we have learned to create and read stories and relate to each other. This is the major limitation to Bordwell's work. He does not consider gender in the discussion on classical film style. He unconsciously accepts a male, Eurocentric norm of narrative. Bordwell suggests that "of all such modes, the classical one conforms most closely to the 'canonic story' which story-comprehension researchers posit as normal for our culture" (18). What is "normal"? Is normal narrative a Eurocentrist concept? If so, then what about other cultures and their methods of narrative logic? Even more important, this mainstream model does not recognize co-cultures within the dominant structure of Western ideology -- Native Americans,

women, or other disaporic cultures like African Americans, Asian Americans, and the European diaspora culture. And what about the components of narration like temporal structure or focalization (point of view)? Is time always linear? Do stories need to be constructed with cause and effect to be understood? Why does a closure effect have to be present to end a film story? All of these questions are relevant to the development of a feminist aesthetic form and the framework to discuss it.

Many filmmakers ask why they have to use classical narrative in constructing their films and why viewers have to keep watching the same kinds of films which do not present realistic, three-dimensional, and significant female characters who address female audience members. The real lives and experiences of women are simply not being portrayed in classical Hollywood. Although, in contemporary film releases such as The Making of an American Quilt (1995), Now and Then (1995), and Waiting to Exhale (1995) we are seeing greater depth and dimension for women characters.

The two goals of feminist filmmaking practice have been to (1) subvert classical, male dominated narrative, in story form, structure, cinematic technique and film content, and thus (2) create a cinema of one's own. There have been other filmmakers who work against the confines of mainstream cinema and promote a model unique to their experiences. The entire genre of art/avant-garde cinema does this on the levels of style and form for ideological, economic and aesthetic reasons. The rich history of the avant garde

movement both in the United States and in other countries does deserve mention here because this project recognizes that many women filmmakers share similar stylistic goals with these filmmakers in questioning the Hollywood form.¹³ Some stylistic techniques developed by avant garde filmmakers have served as models for women filmmakers. But the feminist film does differ, primarily in regards to offering feminist oriented thematic concerns and centralizing women's subjectivity.

Feminist filmmaker's work also aligns with other marginalized artists. Third World (also called Third Cinema) filmmakers work in three phases of filmmaking, according to Teshome Gabriel (1989). Phase one is the "Unqualified Assimilation Phase," where primary identification, theme, and style align with the Western Hollywood film industry. Phase two, what Gabriel calls the "Remembrance Phase," indigenizes control of talent, production, exhibition and distribution. Thus themes and style begin to reflect the reality of life for specific peoples, locales, and concerns, not the Hollywood perspective of them. For example, the themes of urban versus rural life, traditional versus modern value systems, and folklore and mythology can be identified in this filmmaking. Gabriel suggests that style in the Remembrance Phase begins to reflect what is appropriate to thematic concerns. He writes that there is a growing insistence on "spatial representation rather than temporal manipulation" (33). He explains that

...the sense of spatial orientation in cinema in the Third World arises out of the experience of an 'endless' world of the large Third World mass. The nostalgia for the vastness of nature projects itself into the film form, resulting in long takes and long or wide shots (33).

The third phase discussed by Gabriel is the "Combative Phase," where filmmaking is seen as a public service and an ideologically based institution, "managed, operated and run for and by the people" (34). Themes in this social-communal phase include the lives and struggles of Third World peoples, ideological questions, stories of power and rebellion, and issues of colonialism. One film by a woman director is commonly referred to as representative of this phase and its stylistic form(s). Sara Gomez Yara's One Way Or Another (1975-77) is about gender roles, race and class bias in Cuba. The traditions of male machismo, as well as class distinctions and racial identity, are challenged by paralleling them with the images of growth and development in Cuba. Ironically some of these images are portrayed as demolished and tattered buildings. She suggests that if these individual social roles are not questioned and do not change, Cuba as a country cannot evolve and will violently disintegrate. But Gomez's style is visionary. Using a combination of documentary and fiction styles (including real and fictional footage), disruptive editing and ideological (montage) cross cutting, Gomez invites audiences to understand the film in a way that goes against mainstream structure. Access to the film requires a different paradigm of spectatorship, in this instance one based on ideological

criticism and non-dominant cinematic style.

Gabriel suggests that filmmakers "manifest a phase III characteristic in their disavowal of the conventions of dominant cinema" (35). Flashbacks can be used as dynamic and developmental references to the past, instead of stagnant temporal reference points. Linear models of storytelling are rejected in favor of more circular models because "Third World oral narratives, founded on traditional culture, are held in memory by a set of formal strategies specific to repeated, oral, face-to-face tellings" (Gabriel 40).

Dorothy Pennington (1990) echoes this temporal (re)arrangement of cultural stories in writing about time in African culture. She suggests that if a culture operates in a linear progression, "those persons will tend to have a greater consciousness of time than those whose existence does not presuppose significant change over time; the latter group may perceive its existence in a circular or cyclical motion" ("Time in African Culture" 126). She divides linear and cyclical understanding of time based on culture. "In commercialized and technological societies, time binding tends to be more commercial and standardized" but in "traditional, agrarian cultures where daily life is rather flexible and relatively unhurried and where travel is slow, accurately measuring time to the second is not of great concern" (126). So Pennington understands that

technology, commercialization, and the resulting social habits are divisive forces which separate humans from natural rhythms.

In non-technological, communal cultures, the relationship of humans to time and destiny is more group-directed, and the sense of continuity belongs more to the collectivity and less to the individual; in communal cultures, many acts are ritualistically prescribed throughout the life of the inhabitants (126).

Drawing on the writings of Joost Meerloo, Pennington asks us to consider that time may not be unilinear, the quality it takes in Hollywood cinema, but four-dimensional, "wherein everyone lives along his or her own subjective time dimension (individual growth) which interacts with and intersects the three other dimensions of past, present and future" (127). The African concept of time holds that the life force, the essence of being, moves at irregular patterns. Time is more fluid, moving with the same unpredictability as the life force (Pennington 129).

Moreover, quoting from John Mbiti, Pennington writes that the concept of a future for some African people is virtually nonexistent. Time is not linear, but relies on a long past as well as the present. Pennington writes that "one can note immediately that the idea of time as moving with an emphasis on the past is in direct contrast to the Western notion of time as following a linear, irreversible progression toward the future" (130). And so African narratives are influenced by the past, often retelling myths, legends, family and ancestral stories to present generations. "The concept of time can be described as helical, the emphasis of the helix lies heavily on the past" (132) and the understanding of the helix is that it looks

back upon itself and provides a cyclical understanding of time. To understand African time, we look to the past as to how it informs our present. How can this concept of time work in the classical mainstream narrative form? New spaces from which to understand time across culture need to be applied to narratology. This cross cultural understanding of time can contribute significantly to feminist filmmaking, especially the filmmaking of those women influenced by constructions of time and space from non-Westernized or industrialized orientations like Julie Dash, Mona Smith and Trinh Minh-ha. It appears that modernity and cultural domination is the delineating element in representation of time and space. The remembering back to, or envisioning for the future, a time without the oppression of capitalist modernization and colonialism reflects filmmaking that indicates different understanding of space and time.

Although the above two examples from Gabriel and Pennington examine narrative structure from different continental and cultural perspectives, another way to conceive of narration as different from the linear, cause-effect model is to return to writings by feminists to see how gender difference influences narration. Susan Winnett (1990) suggests that the problems in understanding literary narrative models and form are rooted in the relationship between narrative and pleasure. This relationship is based on sexual difference -- a sexual difference framed from a patriarchal perspective. Narrative pleasure is defined as engagement, even eroticism, with texts, whether they be

literary or cinematic. Citing Peter Brook's influential "Freud's Master Plot" she discusses the master narrative structure and its relation to Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle. Winnett synthesizes Brooks' writing on Freud's discussion of the pleasure principle which "charts the route an organism takes when, stimulated out of quiescence, it strives to regain equilibrium by finding the appropriate means of discharging the energy invested in it. According to this scheme, desire would be, even at its inception, a desire for the end" ("Coming Unstrung" 507-8). Paralleling narrative structure and its subsequent pleasure to male orgasm, Winnett argues that "a narratology based on the oedipal model would have to be profoundly and vulnerably male in its assumptions about what constitutes pleasure and, more insidiously, what this pleasure looks like" (506). Male textual pleasure follows the path of male sexual gratification -- its arousal, expectancy, linearity or onward movement -- toward the finality of climax, and closure. What Brooks assumes as "the oedipal dynamics that structure and determine traditional fictional narratives and psychoanalytic paradigms," Winnett points out "reminds us, in case we had forgotten, what men want, how they go about trying to get it, and the stories they tell about this pursuit" (506). Male biased narratology has considered only male desire in narrative pleasure.

In Teresa de Lauretis's Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics and Cinema, she quotes Robert Scholes from "the Orgastic Pattern of Fiction,"

The archetype of all fiction is the sexual act. In saying this I do not mean merely to remind the reader of the connection between all art and the erotic in human nature...For what connects fiction -- and music -- with sex is the fundamental orgasmic rhythm of tumescence and detumescence, of tension and resolution, of intensification to the point of climax and consummation. In the sophisticated forms of fiction, as in the sophisticated practice of sex, much of the art consists of delaying climax within the framework of desire in order to prolong the pleasurable act itself (Winnett 506; de Lauretis 108).

Men's pleasure (as narrative structure) has been normalized and women have either had to accept this or come to consider that their pleasure might look or sound different. What Winnett offers to my argument is that the master plot or master narrative that Bordwell and others have written about relies wholly on "male morphology and male experience, [where] we retained the general narrative pattern of tension and resolution" (508). So the primary goal by feminists is to locate areas of difference in pleasure. Engagement with difference in texts are based on a wholly different paradigm and its inclusive social subjects, thematics and subsequent pleasure.

Winnett goes on to argue that birth and breast feeding are more appropriate models for women's understanding of pleasure in narrative because they are experiences of the female body, still incorporating the distinctions of incipience, repetition and closure, but from feminine perspectives.¹⁴ Both birth and breastfeeding, according to Winnett are "prospective, full of the incipience that the male model will see resolved in its images of detumescence

and discharge. Their ends (in both senses of the word) are, quite literally, beginning itself" (509). Breast feeding is stimulated by demand of a very dependent other rather than one's own desire" (509) and birth literally gives life to another, not to oneself. Desire is not directed inwardly but reliant on gratification (or life affirmation) of an(other). Therefore closure (ending) is only present in relation to beginnings. So as the Oedipal model has evolved into the exemplary narrative model of struggle for men, women remain outside of the experiences of this "legend." Winnett states that "female narrative remains in search of a comparably authoritative legend, the fiction to recognize all the untold stories buried in the wake of the "official histories that do get told" (514).

Winnett not only displaces the universalist tendencies used in the construction of narratology, but offers critical discourse on traditional psychoanalysis, especially when it "invokes the Freudian apparatus" (511) because as critics draw from his work in development of a literary theory and

implicate the scenario of male pleasure in the processes that determine narrative sequence as well as the narrative's aesthetic, erotic, and ethical yield, it would seem that the pleasure of the text depends on the gratification of the [male] reader's erotic investment (511).¹⁵

Moreover, Winnett argues that "once we recognize how a psychoanalytic dynamic of reading assumes the universality of the male response, we have little difficulty noticing how arbitrary the foundations of its universalizations are" (511). Not only does Winnett identify that dominant male

universalizations are not accurately considerate of female pleasure or perspective, but she may suggest another important idea for feminists to consider. Any universalist tendency runs the danger of exclusion, while posturing itself as a normalized theory of inclusion.

Considering The Master's Tools: Narratology Up To Now and Glimpses of a Feminist Perspective

Narratology, a term introduced by Russian formalist Tzvetan Todorov, is the formal analysis of narrative structures. Narrative address works on two levels, that of the story and that of the plot (discourse). Seymour Chatman (1978) distinguishes the different elements in narrative. A narrative text is composed of a "story (histoire), the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting); and a discourse (discours)...the expression, the means by which the content is communicated" (Story and Discourse 19). Russian formalists define the story, which they called the fabula, as the "pattern of relationships between characters and the pattern of action as they unfold in chronological order" (Stam et al. New Vocabularies 71). Story includes "'Characters' (both in terms of what they are and what they do in the story); 'Events' (including the sequences of action); and 'Context' (including historical, geographical, cultural and local)" (Hart-Stivale 353).¹⁶ Fabula/histoire is the "raw material or basic outline of the story, prior to artistic organization" (Stam et al. 71) or the "sum total of

events to be related in the narrative" (Chatman Story and Discourse 19). Simply put, the story is the "what" of narration.

The discourse/plot, or syuzhet/sjuzet, is the stylistic and artistic ordering of "causal-chronological events" (Stam et al. 71), "the story as actually told by linking the events together" (Chatman 20). The discourse is "the how" and ideologically, the "why" of narration. My analysis is primarily concerned with interpreting discursive (syuzhet) patterns used by each filmmaker to understand how the ordering of plot events influence or indicate thematic structuring and feminist commentary. However, I suggest that context, which is traditionally aligned under the elements of story, be considered as relevant to a feminist narrative. Context applies to authorship and authorship is central to feminist filmmakers, a point I discuss later in this chapter.

Examination of narrative discourse, the way in which the narrator presents the events to the narratee, includes three categories: tense, mood (focalization) and voice. Tense is the temporal arrangement of material or the organizing pattern of story events. Mood is also referred to as point of view, filtration, slant and/or focalization. This dissertation uses the term focalization to represent the overall perspective of the story material. Focalization can be understood in cinematic narration as "who sees" the story material as it is presented/narrated. It is the perspective through which the story is narrated. Voice is

the narration from diegetic characters, the cinematic narrator and vocal commentary from outside of the story world. This area further elucidates "who speaks" the film text, how it is narrated.

Susan Lanser's discussion of tone illustrates feminist work being done in the area of focalization [and cinematic narration]. She writes that "tone might be conceived at least in part as a function of the relationship between the deep and superficial structures of an illocutionary act (e.g. the relationship between an act of judgement and the language in which the judgement is expressed)" (349) or what narratologists refer to as story (the raw narrative materials) and discourse (the arrangement, and manner in which those materials are communicated). It includes the visual discourse of the text and any extradiegetic elements which provide commentary or guideposts to understanding the narrative discourse and its meaning -- like music, sound effects, editing, shot composition or mise en scène. The narrating discourse may be the clearest point at which a text can take on ideological and political slants or nuances.

These categories, explained by Gerard Genette in Narrative Discourse, An Essay in Method, translated in 1980 from Figure III (1972), assist in the interpretation of the various levels and means of narrative discourse. Narrative discourse, according to Burgoyne, includes the "signifying techniques and formal strategies by which a narrative is related to a reader or spectator -- and the different roles

and levels involved in transmitting narrative messages" (New Vocabularies 84).

Tense includes three distinct subcategories: order (how the "events are arranged [recounted] in the narrative discourse" in relation to when they are said to occur), duration (the story time in relation to the discourse time), and frequency (the relationship between the number of times an event happens and the number of times it is recounted (Henderson "Tense, Mood, Voice" 5; Prince Dictionary 24, 36). The component of temporality allows for elaboration, retardation, repetition or accentuation of story material in its presentation. Alterations in the ordering of the fabula (story) often reveal parallel relations between past and present or are used to underscore themes in the story. According to Burgoyne temporal fluctuation provides a "powerful artistic technique for rendering the story world in a varied and aesthetically interesting manner" (New Vocabularies 118).

In regards to temporality in feminist narrative, Lanser considers "the most abstract and grammatical concepts (say, theories of time)" (344) too inadequate for a feminist narratology. This study considers tense as a centrally relevant element of narratology because of the proliferation of women's texts that in some manner thematically address history, memory, and re-visioning the past. A feministic oriented narratology understands that new stories are created to recall the past and to be told again in the future. The oral tradition of repetition in the matriarchal

lineage applies to a feminist narratology. In addition, more models for understanding the elusive concept of time itself are needed in narratology as exemplified by the earlier discussion of Pennington's writing about African time.

Order can be communicated chronologically (in the Western linear sense) or through anachronies which are deviations from straight chronological order. Drawing from Henderson's interpretation of Genette's narrative material, Burgoyne notes that because cinema has no "built in tense system," deviation from linear chronology must be signaled with any of the auditory or visual channels: "voice over, musical effects, changes in costume or locale, blurring or stippling of the image, as well as such devices as whirling leaves or turning calendar pages" (New Vocabularies 119; "Tense, Mood, Voice" 6). A cinematic cataclysm or metadiegetic indicator (through style or technique) of sorts is required for a tense shift. These assertions hold true only if you understand linear chronology as the given or normal sense of ordering.

Henderson writes that "anachronous narratives begin, in one way or another, *in medias res*, then go backwards (analepses) or forwards (prolepses)" ("Tense, Mood, Voice" 5). Lezlie Hart-Stivale (1991) adds additional understanding of temporal order, suggesting another subcategory called "instances of reflection." She argues that in particular texts, primarily women's texts that

...numerous evocations of the past, either

through the presence of voices that belong to the "first narrative" or photographs that represent past time while figuring into the narrative present, contradict Genette's concept of analepses in that they grant access to the past while remaining part of the 'first narrative' ("Timely Considerations" 359).

These are the instances of reflection, which are invoked by events in the primary narration (what Hart-Stivale calls first narrative), usually in the present tense. It is useful to quote Hart-Stivale at length here considering feminist narrative, when she notes that,

While Rimmon-Kenan recognizes 'instances of reflection' in what she calls 'acts of remembering' and considers that memories recounted by characters may figure into the 'first narrative,' she nonetheless excludes 'instances of reflection' from the analeptic category in a different way by privileging 'events' over the reflective process: 'it is only the content of the memory...that constitutes a past...event' ("Timely Consideration" 359).

So Hart-Stivale points out that time is structured on a model based on action, noting that Rimmon-Kenan emphasizes "active 'occurrences' over less active alternatives" (360). She also notes that Genette "insists on a similar activity, stating that 'narrative, which tells stories, is concerned only with events'" (360). The emphasis on events further illustrates the use of the linear, action-resolution, and closure based model as the universal model for understanding narrative. Hart-Stivale quotes Rimmon-Kenan further noting that she "dismisses 'acts of remembering' from the scope of analepsis by considering them passive elements that must ultimately be reinforced by 'occurrences'" (360). But acts

of remembering are particularly important in women's narrative, as is history and re-imagining women's screen roles. Time is not only thematically linked to a feminist narratology, but structurally as well through story presentation in cyclical, rhythmic and episodic manners.

The durational element in narration accounts for the variations of speed or rhythm between the pacing of the story and the alterable rendering of that story discursively. Duration consists of scene, descriptive pause/stretch, summary, and ellipsis. A film has a fixed viewing time usually indicated by its running time, but according to Brian Henderson,

[their]...multi-channeled textuality raises durational problems, and opportunities, not found in literature. Image, dialogue, voice-over, music, sound effects, and written materials may contribute, complementarily or redundantly, to a single duration; or they may create multiple, simultaneous, or contradictory temporalities (9).

Scene indicates that discourse time is directly equal to story time. Summary occurs when discourse time is less than or shorter than story time. This element of temporality suggests that a relatively long portion of narrated story material corresponds to a relatively short passage of discourse, as seen in transitions and scene connectors like swish pans and montage. There may be combinations of slo-down within summary. I identify these instances of scene duration as "interludes." This temporal experience wanes from a primary line of narrative movement, but their purpose serves the first narrative in some way --

contextually, archetypically, politically, or introspectively. Interludes circulate within and around narrative story material. Interludes relate to Winnett's arguments for recognizing the "gendered" use of detours, repetitions, and lack of resolution in narrating instances ("Coming Unstrung" 508).

Ellipse occurs when time passes in the story while no time elapses in the discourse. It involves the editing out of unimportant events, covering vast amounts of story time in discourse time.

Pause or descriptive pause suggests that discourse time is greater than story time, or that time seems to stand still in the story while the description or discursive presentation carries on. Description is a problematic area in cinema, as nearly almost everything shown through visual channels and heard through auditory channels in presentation of story material. Do descriptive shots only describe or do they advance the narrative in some way? Most often descriptive pauses are seen in opening or closing sequences to bring narratees into the story world and provide for closure of the diegesis and exit into the real world. The primary function of the establishing shot, used most often before and under opening credits is more often than not descriptive pause.

The temporal category of pause is important to a feminist narratology because pause is where some kind of narratorial commentary can be communicated. It is a place where the feminist narrative sees possibility. The notion

of pause, like the slo-down within summary, also relates in principle to Hart-Stivale's concepts of instances of reflection in women's narration, where the story world seems to stand still momentarily, reflecting to another point in time or place or reminding readers/viewers of a feminist sensibility. Winnett's suggestion of breast feeding as a narrative model close to the activity of women's experiences provides for instances of pausing, reflection, and repetition for creative and nurturative functions.

It provides context to the story, an historical background and a feminist centered ideology. For example, Laura Gaither (1996) writes of Julie Dash's use of the close-up and slow motion in Daughters of the Dust asserting that "Dash intentionally slows time and movement, creating time for audiences to study her subjects" (103). Within descriptive pause, Dash "provides a place for Black looks, a place where the camera probes and lingers lovingly over Black women...to render the Black female visible" because Hollywood did not (105).

The pause may be seen as an instance of non-coherence, where the author/filmmaker gets off the point. However, pause can be understood as a generative function within narrative. It serves to add something to the narrative, but purposely not within the confines of a single trajectory.

This is also reminiscent of the work of May Sarton, whose twelve published personal journals speak to this instance of pausing, especially Journal of A Solitude (1973). In it Sarton writes fluidly between descriptive

prose -- about the flowers she sees on the mantle in the room, the cow barn she visits or the color of the day sky -- and introspective passages where her thoughts occupy the narrative space. Sarton writes,

I did write a poem, so it was not a wholly wasted day, after all. And it occurs to me that there is a proper balance between not asking enough of oneself and asking or expecting too much. It may be that I set my sights too high and so repeatedly end a day in depression. Not easy to find the balance, for if one does not have wild dreams of achievement, there is no spur even to get the dishes washed (Solitude 101).

This movement between descriptive telling/showing and introspection is like the narrative turning into itself, to lend the inner spaces of the story material to its telling. The posture of some French feminists in developing a language of women does involve analogizing it to inner space, that of the vagina and womb.¹⁷ Although this cannot be accurately "proven" through dominant scientific discourse and is challenging to conceive of theoretically, the concept of spaces within narrative could be considered in re-visioning a new paradigm from which to understand the qualities, and therefore, the techniques of a feminist narrative. Moreover, it is not without notice that journals (like Sartons'), diaries and personal letters were at one time the only "legitimate" writing expression for women to participate in. These writings "of the personal" are also the primary means of gathering information and research on women's lives when men's lives and activities were publicly recorded as "official" history. Places of narrative

introspection fit well into these traditionally labelled "women's" genres.

The pause itself is also gendered if it serves feminist goals of questioning dominant discursive practices. Use of the pause could be ideological and political and also provide textual commentary. This latter method of descriptive pause is seen through narratorial intervention where comments on the act of narration itself take place. Trinh Minh-ha's films illustrate this metanarration as her work drifts between a story world and commentary on that world through direct confrontation and stylistic reflexivity. The narrative pauses on itself to comment on its construction of discursive story material.

Chatman (1990) also provides interesting commentary on description in cinema stating that the medium privileges tacit description. Description is not parallel to that of the lingering description in literature. Since it is the nature of films to show, they are always in a descriptive mode and "the film image, as a sign or group of signs...exhausts the total potential of visible descriptive details" (39). Description, because of the visuality of the medium is "submerged in ongoing action" and in this mode "highlight(s) properties, rather than actions, for the viewer's attention" especially if the camera is not motivated for any other purpose (43). This does not necessarily take into account what I suggest -- description, especially descriptive pause as an ideologically gendered technique -- but Chatman does recognize description as

emanating from an authoring agent. All of the contextual elements in cinema: costume design, actors, sets, locales, props, and the like are attributable to the "inventional principle (or implied author), who furnishes them to the cinematic narrator for immediate presentation" (38). There will be more thorough discussion of the implied author later in this chapter as it relates to a feminist narrative. But it is important to note that contextual description is relevant to these women's films. The temporal pause used to show descriptive elements provides information on women's culture and consciousness. Women filmmakers actively engage their audiences through descriptive pause or interludes (slo-down/summary) and these instances of the narrative fold into themselves to illustrate a feminist narrative structure, one that is clearly different from the linearity of masculine narrative.

The category of temporal frequency is understood as the relation between the number of times something occurs in the story to the number of times it is represented in the discourse or the "relations of repetition between narrative and the story" (Henderson 10). One may narrate once, what happened once, or one may narrate n times what happened n times -- both called singulative forms. If one narrates n times what happened once it is called the repeating form. Or one may narrate one time what happened n times -- the iterative form. ¹⁸

Frequency allows us to interpret the presence and purpose of intradiegetic narrators and their rendering of

significant events. This is of interest in feminist film studies because intra and extra diegetic narration provides historical, political and ideological commentary within various narrating instances. The technique of frequency also argues that there is a repeating story form, which suggests the circularity that Third Film scholar Gabriel writes about. This technique also underscores the use of multiple/communal narrators and variable focalizers within the diegesis. The story is recounted by several character narrators from varying perspectives.

The category of tense is significant in this study because it allows us to examine temporal ordering of story material which may not conform to the linear, chronological progression of narrative and the dominant cause-effect model. There are other models of time that can be elucidated from examination of the films of Dash, Smith and Minh-ha, and each of their films will illustrate temporality across other differences. In addition, many women's films have a thematic concern for history, whether it be women re-historicizing themselves visually or through their criticism of dominant historical representations. With the predominance of historical themes in these films, historical analysis and interpretation can occur on the level of tense, and we can also apply this to understanding different paradigms of temporal consciousness.

The narratological concept focalization (point of view) is what Genette calls mood or the distance and perspective of narration. According to Mieke Bal, distance "has to do

with the old distinction between showing and telling or the even older one between mimesis and diegesis" (Storytelling 75). However, narrative perspective or point of view does not exclusively relate to an optical rendering of story events, but it does account for "who sees" in the narration -- from what perspective is it filtered through. Burgoyne suggests that "point of view is one of the most important means of structuring narrative discourse and one of the most powerful mechanisms for audience manipulation" (New Vocabularies 84). This element of narration is an important area for feminist inquiry considering the ideological component of media texts.

Point of view has been a limited concept in feminist theory, with the historical focus on psychoanalysis and the omniscient male spectator point-of-view theories. Point of view in narratology takes into account emotional and cognitive narrative subjectivity, not just spectatorial optics. Henderson writes that Genette "prefers the term 'focus of narration' or 'focalization' to 'point of view'" (13), but his work still is concerned with optical meaning -- "the position or angle of vision from which events are viewed" (Stam et al. 89). And according to Burgoyne, who provides commentary on the work of Nick Browne, approaching point of view not exclusively as optical point of view "emphasizes the narrator's techniques for rendering the subjectivity or the character -- his or her emotional and cognitive state -- as well as the techniques for evaluating, ironizing, confirming or disconfirming the character's

thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes" (Stam et al. 85). For feminist film critics, focalization is especially important because it allows us to examine textual discourse and spectatorial engagement from a gendered perspective -- with women seeing their images and engaging with them on some other level of knowing. Focalization also allows us to move beyond monolithic concepts of spectatorship when reading texts. As Burgoyne indicates "issues of race, class and historical context are also involved in analyzing the issue of point-of-view from the perspective of the spectator" (Stam et al. 86).

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's expanded definition of point of view, which she calls facets of focalization, also advances the understanding of the non-optical nature of narrative mood. She proposes not only a perceptual facet of focalization, where she says focalization initiates "prism" or "angle of vision," but also facets which are "broadened to include cognitive, emotive and ideological orientation" (Narrative Fiction 71). However, as Burgoyne points out, these new terms change Genette's original concepts about "who sees" in the narrative (Stam et al. 94) and Burgoyne suggests that these commentative orientations fall better within the category of cinematic narration (voice).

Chatman (1990) offers alternative terminology to understand character and narrative perspective. The term "slant" names "the narrator's attitudes and other mental nuances appropriate to the reporting function of discourse, and filter [names] the much wider range of mental activity

experienced by characters in the story world -- perceptions, cognition, attitudes, emotions, memories, fantasies" (Coming to Terms 143). The term "filter" captures "the mediating function of a character's consciousness...as events are experienced from a space within the story world" (Chatman Coming to Terms 144).

Chatman's notion of slant provides some explanation for narrative commentary which has affiliation to an authorial intrusion or implied authorship. Feminist film theorists who are interested in films that tell the "real" stories of women are concerned with not only how the images work on the discursive level but who creates those images. If women filmmakers take it upon themselves to serve creative functions in changing the images, roles and understanding of women, then their authorial -- "creation" function needs to be at least considered in the area of focalization.

Production context and the generative element of focalization is prominent in understanding a feminist narrative. What we see in the text comes from research, careful planning, and outside influence as much as it comes from the diegetic world as it unfolds. Focalization is the perspective of the text which is influenced from beyond the text.

There have been numerous contributions naming this perceptual facet in narration. This work uses the term focalization because it remains relevant to the "showing" element of narration while also recognizing other manifestations than the traditional optical point of view.

This analysis considers what is shown on screen visually, how it is shown (composition, color, lighting, shot distance, depth, angle, etc.) and diegetically, who sees it. Focalization can either be from an intratextual character's points of view, which can be focalized as singular or multiple perspectives. Focalization can also be seen through the extradiegetic, cinematic focalizer which provides descriptive, commentative, and interpretive functions.

Focalization can also be contextually motivated. This assists in explaining why and how images are presented from a feminist narrative perspective. Moreover, contextual focalization serves to question dominant cinematic practices and develop new ways of focalizing the female social subject.

The third subcategory proposed by Genette and expanded upon by Brian Henderson for cinema studies is voice, the narration itself, or "who speaks." Voice represents the set of cinematic signs that characterize the narrating instance (Prince 102). The function of voice is to address the narratee, provide testimonials and interpret the story. Voice can be understood through personified (internal, personal) character-narrators, those operating within the diegesis who may be an active participant in the story he or she relates, or may be a witness to it" (Stam et al. 97). Voice may also be communicated through an impersonal-external, extradiegetic narrator which is the "primary narratorial or discursive activity flowing from the medium

of cinema itself" (Stam et al. 103). This external narrator "manifests itself not through verbal discourse but through a range of cinematic codes and channels of expression" (Stam et al. 97) like music/sound, editing structure, speed and rhythm of narration, and contextual elements.

In traditional narratology, narrative voice considers only these two levels of narrative discourse: character narration including dialogue, voice over, and monologue; and cinematic narration which includes images, editing, and sound. Character narrators can provide commentary through the story material and how it is spoken, thus they can serve subversive, feminist functions.

Narrative voice also recognizes narration other than the diegetic characters. This narration is understood as the grand (cinematic) narrator working outside the diegesis. Cinematic narration can include all of the technical aspects of lighting, mise en scène, editing, and sound. These technical devices are used as cues in the recounting of story material. The cinematic or impersonal narrator "both creates or constructs the fictional world while at the same time referring to it as if it has an autonomous existence, as if it pre-existed the illocutionary act" (Stam et al. 117). Burgoyne adds that diegetic narration "analogize film to a type of rhetoric, discourse or quasi-linguistic form of enunciation" (Stam et al. 104). Location, color, camera distance and angle, music and editing type or rhythm are what Chatman calls "communicating devices" or encoded cues which the viewer then uses to "reconstruct the film's

narrative" (Coming to Terms 127, 134). Cinematic narration can also be ideologically commentative and question dominant ways of representation. In this case, women's placement at the center of film acts as feminist cinematic narration. We see their centrality in non-hierarchical and non-stereotypical representation.

Lanser and Warhol offer new understanding of narrative voice from a feminist perspective. They both attempt to create new categories of voice to further elucidate and understand gendered narration. Nünning writes that "the efforts to develop new categories for the description of the behavior and functions of narrative instances is the main idea...of Warhol's contribution to a feminist narratology" (112). She designated two kinds of narrative voicing: the distancing narrator and the engaging narrator. They "distinguish themselves by a high degree of detachment from the narrated world and on the basis of their commentaries, judgements, generalizations and, specific to the reader, come forward as tangible speakers" (Nünning 112). Distancing narrators construct distance between the narrator and text recipient because the recipient has difficulty identifying or attaching to the textual (character) narratee because they are already so carefully described emotionally, cognitively, or behaviorally. Warhol's distancing narrator "discourages the actual reader from identifying with the narratee" (Nünning 113). This category does not relate to cinema which uses its visuality to communicate character (narratee) emotion, cognition and behavior. Viewers may be

witness to a character's behavior, but often project their own emotional and cognitive reactions and identifications onto that behavior. Cinema opens up for much more identification with character narrators and narratees automatically through its visual and auditory channels.

Warhol's engaging narrator

distinguishes itself in that it attempts to bridge the gap between text and reader. For this purpose an engaging narrator makes the effort to establish an intense relation with the addressee through frequent speeches to the reader and other textual strategies. With this...the aim of such a narrative instance [is] to create a trusting speaking relationship with the fictitious, and through the mode of identification, also with the real reader (Nünning 112).

Warhol's engaging narrator encourages identification of the real reader with the character narrators and narratees. This literary model of narration again does not serve to explain cinematic narrative voice. If tactics are used like Nünning describes above, the real viewer is often made aware of cinema's construction of realism, thus they are distanced from the diegesis rather than engaged with it. Cinema's use of such tactics as direct address, meta narration, and disruptive technical cues call attention more to identification with the real author (filmmaker) or film as mode of representation rather than the intradiegetic narrators/narratees.

Lanser situates her literary criticism in the notion that

narration entails social relationship and thus involves far more than the technical imperatives for getting a story told. The

narrative voice and the narrated world are mutually constitutive; if there is no tale without a teller, there is no teller without a tale (Fictions of Authority 4).

Lanser recognizes that voice comes from historical and contextual influences on creation and reading/viewing of the text as well as its diegetic instances. She writes that "when narrative theorists talk about voice, we are usually concerned with formal structures and not with the causes, ideologies, or social implications of particular practices" (4). When feminists speak of voice in texts it refers to the "behavior of actual or fictional persons and groups who assert woman-centered points of view" (4). By approaching textual voice in different ways, narratology and feminism have myopically discovered different aspects and effects of voice. Lanser continues that "feminist criticism does not ordinarily consider the technical aspects of narration, and narrative poetics does not ordinarily consider the social properties and political implications of narrative voice" (4).

Lanser combines feminism and narratology by suggesting three new categories of voices in narration: authorial, personal and communal (Fictions of Authority 15). The three modes represent what Lanser calls "particular kinds of narrative consciousness" (15). Across all three modes she then concerns herself with two narrative aspects: private and public narrative voice. Private voice is "narration directed toward a narratee who is a fictional character" (15). Public voice is "narration directed toward a narratee

'outside' the fiction who is analogous to the historical reader" (15). Public voice is the narrative agent that allows for self-referentiality. Nünning notes that these are not new distinctions because

the differentiation between private and public voice is directed at the hierarchal embedded relationship of the communication level of the narrative text which forms the basis for a differentiation between hetero or extro diegetical narrative instances and narrating characters or intradiegetical narrators (109).

This same distinction exists in the difference between character narrators and the cinematic narrator. What Nünning points out is that Warhol and Lanser really only rename narrative categories that have already been in use by narratologists. However, their work does illustrate different uses and applications of those typological categories which understand a gender based influence.

Lanser's notion of three modes of narration include 'authorial' which identifies "situations that are heterodiegetic, public, and potentially self-referential" (15). Lanser suggests "that such a voice (re)produces the structural and functional situation of authorship" (16), but does not necessarily apply to the real author. The primary characteristics of the authorial mode of narration is that this voice "undertake[s] 'extrarepresentational' acts: reflections, judgements, generalizations about the world 'beyond' the fiction, direct addresses to the narratee, comments on the narrative process, allusions to other writers and texts" (16-17). Most closely allied with this

mode of narration is film maker Trinh Minh-ha whose documentary style questions the very conventions of that film form. This mode of voice also relates to the collaborative/constructive narration that I suggest later in this chapter.

Lanser's 'personal voice' refers "to narrators who are self-consciously telling their own histories...the 'I' who tells the story is also the story's protagonist" (18-19). This category of narrative voice recognizes diegetic and extradiegetic voices as equally rhetorical. Lanser writes that "conventional narrative poetics has often viewed authorial and personal voices as formal antithesis, the one constituting the 'diegetic' voice of a fictional author, the other constituting the 'mimetic' voice of a character" (20). These are seen in the cinematic narrative categories of cinematic narration and character narration. Lanser continues that

the two modes carry different forms of rhetorical authority: paradoxically, authorial narrative is understood as fictive and yet its voice is accorded a superior reliability, while personal narrative may pass for autobiography but the authority of its voice is always qualified (20).

Lanser suggests with personal voice that both intra and extra diegetic narrative voice should be understood as equal fictions of authority within the text. She illustrates this through analysis of twentieth century novels by African-American women like Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937) and Alice Walker's The Color Purple (1982). Lanser writes that

African-American literature was born in the slave narrative and hence in the public voice...[Alice] Walker...reclaims for African-American women the right to privacy and reveals that the private voice of epistolarity may have a more positive value for African-American narrators than the restrictive place...it occupied for white narrators in the eighteenth century (213).

Walker, like filmmaker Julie Dash, "restores the black female narrator to a black female audience" (Lanser, Fictions of Authority 213).

The third voice category that Lanser outlines is the 'communal' voice which refers to "a spectrum of practices that articulate either a collective voice or a collective of voices that share narrative authority" (Fictions of Authority 21). Lanser continues that this practice "is invested in a definable community and textually inscribed either through multiple, mutually authorizing voices or through the voice of a single individual who is manifestly authorized by a community" (21). Lanser suggests three possibilities of communal voice: the singular form "in which one narrator speaks for a collective" (21), a simultaneous form "in which a plural 'we' narrates" (21), and a sequential form "in which individual members of a group narrate in turn" (21). Lanser notes that this communal form manifests itself primarily in the fictions of marginal or suppressed communities. The communal voice is elemental in moving texts away from individual protagonist based stories, "calling into question the heterosocial contract that has defined women's place in Western fiction," (22) toward understanding the construction, operation and maintenance of

a female oriented community and consciousness. I use the idea of communal voice/narration in this work not so much as a way to structure narrative discourse, but as a means to further understand the content of films in which female commonalities and differences are central. I also collapse Lanser's three distinctions because within a film, communal voice can operate on any of these levels, simultaneously and/or continuously shifting. Communal voice is the voice which understands women's consciousness. It recognizes multiple character narrators as well as a centralizing feminist ideological and cultural perspective. Communal voices, like the maternal functions outlined by Winnett, are generative voices which provide the space for many to be heard. Communal voice exists both on the intradiegetic and extradiegetic levels. The communal voice focuses first on community, and secondly on individuality within that community.

Despite these distinctions and because there is limited work in cinematic voice, this narratological category still divides into two main categories: cinematic voice and character voice. But the narratological voice also works on another level besides character, an intradiegetic narration, and cinematic, an extradiegetic narration. Voicing or creating the feminist film narrative itself is an act of narration. So a third narrative category can be added to the "telling" element of narrative. This category is identified as **conceptual/collaborative narration** and it relates directly to the function of the implied author in

the voicing of the story material. The extradiegetic mode of communal voice works itself out here. Conceptual narration includes all the research and writing, plus collaboration (camera operators, director, sound technicians, editors, etc.), and contextual elements that worked together to "conceive" and collaboratively produce the text -- from costume research to hair styles and set design. Chatman (1986) presents discussion of the implied author as "an agent who stands between the real author and the narrator" (Stam 101). Because film is a collaborative medium, discussion of one author as the overriding influence proves problematic. So conceptual/collaborative narration takes into account various production contributions -- lighting design, camera work, music composition -- as well as those elements manifesting from careful and accurate contextual and historical research -- costumes, language, and folkways. Contextual elements brought to the narration of the text constitute its conceptual voice. So that when Julie Dash situates her cinematic women characters within the communal space of the family tradition, relying on research of African custom and ancestral ways, and actively uses this information in the narrative of Daughters of the Dust, it can be labelled as a feminist aesthetic technique which illustrates a conceptual/collaborative narration. The centrality of women's roles in the continuation of ritual, traditional folkways and community is narrated partially through the contextuality of this film.

Contextual considerations of the narrating voice have

not been completely negated from narrative studies, but need to be investigated further. The communicative metaphor that Chatman sets up recognizes a source (encoder of narrative material), text (narrative/message), and receiver. This model has potential to recognize that the text has a generative meaning beyond itself. This radically disrupts the traditional narratological concept of a text only analysis. But feminist narratology goes beyond a text centered analysis, to disrupt dominant models of narrative inquiry and to include culture, history and context.

Character, cinematic and conceptual/collaborative narration function by constructing and communicating the narrative story material through variable discursive spectatorial attitudes. The changing modes of narration provide for a consideration of gendered narration. In addition to being the primary means of narrative address, voice works collectively to forward thematic ideas, whether they be political, historical or cultural. Narrative voice is commentative on feminist ideological levels and it is emotional, often portraying the subjectivity and cognitive states of characters.

Lanser suggests that we consider the importance of multiple narratives/narrators or many voices within one text. Using the dialogic theories of Bakhtin, she suggests "that in narrative there is no single voice, [...] voice impinges upon voice, yielding a structure in which discourses of and for the other constitute the discourses of self; that, to go as far as Wayne Booth does, 'We are

constituted in polyphony'" (Feminist Narratology 349).

Women's narratives illustrate the

...polyphony of all voice...and certainly of the female voices ...For the condition of being woman in a male-dominated society may well necessitate the double voice, whether as conscious subterfuge or as tragic dispossession of the self" (Lanser Feminist Narratology 349).

Utilizing this perspective, women's narratives are potentially subversive texts, representing double or multiple voiced testaments to challenge patriarchal standards and practices. Lanser adds that

A narratology adequate to women's texts (and hence to all texts, though polyphony is more pronounced and more consequential in women's narratives and in the narratives of other dominated peoples) would have to acknowledge and account for this polyphone of voice, identifying and disentangling its strands (349-350).

For example, in the work of Julie Dash, multiple character narrators work as multiple voices and as a unifying Black feminist voice within the texts Daughters of the Dust (1991) and Illusions (1983). The character voices themselves are subversive because they question dominant ways of knowing, representing and speaking because black women have not had this opportunity in mainstream American cinema. Black women become central to the narrative in their voicing of the story. Character narration educates and connects women who recognize their personal and cultural realities on the screen. These voices also promote self identity in an identification process whereby narratees witness and share stories with their screen sisters and experience a mirroring

and expansion of consciousness.

Considering the model of the conceptual/collaborative narrator, and drawing on theoretical works by Chatman (1990), Rimmon-Kenan (1983), and Burgoyne (1990) who explore levels of character narration and cinematic narration, the next three chapters will examine how Julie Dash, Mona Smith and Trinh T. Minh-ha, as feminist directors, construct gendered, politically conscious voices (addresses) in their filmmaking practices. These women directors also present traditional diegetic narrators who provide story material within the narrative world.

The Implied Author: Conceptual/Collaborative Narration and Visualizing The Female Social and Personal Self

Conceptual/collaborative narration can only arise from a recognition of an implied author in the narrating instance. It suggests that voice can be metadiegetic in addition to intra and extra diegetic (character and cinematic). At the level of the implied author we see feminist narrative at work because this is the location of contextuality, which holds potential for presenting perspectives of women from places that they occupy in the social and political milieu. The text is feminist and the creation and presentation of that text is a feminist act.

Julie Dash, Mona Smith and Trinh Minh-ha are the conceptual/collaborative narrators in this sense. Lanser suggests that the "narrative act itself becomes the source of possibility" (357). Women's films can be understood as

voices of self identification and metamorphosis. As Gibson-Hudson suggests women artists of color "frequently infuse their work with didactic messages exposing racial and sexual inequities by pointing to aspects of their lives that are lost in the stereotypes and narrow roles allotted them in the mass media" (366).¹⁹ The voicing is in the use of cinema itself as the medium to challenge historical images, and create personal, cultural and political realities for women to participate in. Feministic oriented narratology does not discount the historical markers surrounding construction of the text. I suggest that this is not exclusive to films by women of color, however, because films which incorporate a gendered discourse, addressing the different historical conditions of being a woman in a patriarchal society, can be the domain of other directors, writers or photographers. Presenting narrative examples of a gender consciousness is the act of a conceptual/collaborative narrator who plants and germinates the seed of the film.

Julie Dash illuminates the lives of black women for black women, but other women have the potential of seeing their stories in these texts. Trinh Minh-ha in Reassemblage represents African women and in Surname Viet Given Name Nam Vietnamese and Vietnamese-American women, but other women have the potential to see a part of their story in these women's stories. Mona Smith speaks to Native Americans, specifically about AIDS, HIV and sexuality, but anyone concerned with sexual orientation, sexuality and this deadly

virus can engage with the text. Smith also speaks from a cosmology that uses archetype, symbol and experience of wholism in her work. These texts by women who are different from each other have the potential to speak, or voice, to many women.

The concept of the implied viewer is relevant here as well. The intended audience that these women directors desire to speak to is different in many ways from the actually audience and their reception. These directors work in areas of specificity, but that does not exclude a textuality of potential. Julie Dash can voice to black women specifically and to many other men or women generally. Smith can speak to the Lakota tribe, but to others as well. The notion of fragmented (small, specific) audiences are defined by these women (black women, gay and lesbian Lakotas or Vietnamese-American women). The filmmakers may have a specific "audience" in mind, but when the film or video is released, other audience(s) certainly arise and these audiences have the potential to include women and men of other differences. The texts speak "for themselves" narratologically, but they also serve as a medium from which the creative, political voice of women filmmakers speak.

Narratology and feminism work together to bring new ways of approaching cinematic texts of difference -- not necessarily different from a canonical classical "norm" -- but different from each other. Taking a more holistic approach to textual analysis may contribute to our understanding of aesthetic difference, mobile meaning

structures, personal spectatorship and production context. Feminist narratology allows us to understand texts across various contextual, structural and cultural variations. Film theory and evolving analytical methods exist only through their ability to re-vision themselves periodically. Theory is fluid so it is difficult to grasp before it changes again. But if we imagine film theory along a continuum, with no beginning or end, but a circular process of becoming, it allows us to re-invent the way theory has been established and accepted. It allows us to expand where there was previously no room for growth.

Notes

1. See the recent editions of Camera Obscura on "Imaging Technologies: Inscribing Science," edited by Paula Treichler and Lisa Cartwright, Nos. 28-29 (1995).

2. Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics and Cinema. Teresa de Lauretis provides an engaging feminist discussion of early linguists and their role in the development of a cine-semiotics. She also traces the use by feminists of their theoretical postures, noting that as I do with this study, the "instinctive annoyance at having to use, at having used unintentionally, the language of the masters. Yet I am remind myself that language and metaphors, especially, need not be thought of as belonging to anyone" (3). She also notes that having found herself in this position of contradiction that "the only way to position oneself outside of that discourse is to displace oneself within it," so that her work is "the contradiction of feminist theory itself, as once excluded from discourse and imprisoned within it" (7).

3. Although Nunning's use of the term "rational" is problematic here because it suggests that an analytical, systematic androcentric method is rational while a feminist centered, interpretative one is not, I use it to illustrate the larger point that narrative analysis and a feminist orientation are useful in combination.

4. In this passage from "Women and Film: A Discussion of Feminist Aesthetics," New German Critique, no. 13 (Winter 1978), de Lauretis notes that Rich draws her comments from some of the early feminist film theorists and their discussion of women's cinema, which I discussed in the previous chapter, including Laura Mulvey, Claire Johnston and Pam Cook.

5. Nunning writes "in contrast to the metaphors which symbolize the linear chronology of historical time, [Elizabeth] Ermarth (1992:45) chooses the nonvisual metaphor of rhythm in order to express the changed concept of time which for the postmodern literature and for the time experience of women is characteristic" (119n).

6. See Teresa de Lauretis, Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics and Cinema (1984); Sarah Kosloff, "Narrative Theory and Television," in Channels of Discourse (1992) and also select issues of Camera Obscura.

7. Stated in Lanser's article is that she is aware of only a few articles incorporating feminist and narratology "Maria Minich Brewer's critique of narratology in 'A Loosening of Tongues,' Mieke Bal's application of it in 'Sexuality, Symbiosis and Binarism' and the recent Femmes imaginaires," (342) translated as "Sexuality, Sin and Sorrow." In

addition, Lanser's argues for a feminist point of view in The Narrative Act and cites Robyn Warhol's essay "Toward a Theory of the Engaging Narrator: Earnest Interventions in Gaskell, Stowe, and Eliot." Lezlie Hart-Stivale has also taken on the task of using a feminist perspective "informed by deconstruction, narratology and psychoanalysis" (1991 iv) in examining the fiction of Colette. Not one citation could be found by this author naming specifically a feminist cinematic narratology.

8. Machiorlatti's brackets to suggest that not only gender is relevant in the construction of literary or cinematic canons and theoretical formulation.

9. The metaphor of the web has also been used in other seemingly unrelated fields of inquiry like business management and leadership. See Sally Helgesen's The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership (1990) and The Web of Inclusion (1995).

10. Machiorlatti's brackets.

11. This material is synthesized from the essay "Classical Hollywood Cinema: Narrational Principles and Procedures," from Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Reader. Ed. Philip Rosen, pgs. 17-34. Bordwell's essay is an adaptation of his book Narration in Fiction Film (1985) and also draws on material discussed in The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960. Eds. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson (1985).

12. Bill Nichols (1991) offers four modes of documentary representation which reflect the dominant organizational patterns around which the texts are structured. The modes include expository, observational, interactive and reflexive. I have added the diarist mode in a recent unpublished work to reflect a current wave of personal documentaries (specifically those by women). I will expand upon Trinh Minh-ha's interactive and reflexive techniques in chapter 5. The expository mode appears to be the closest to a classical Hollywood fiction form, while the interactive and reflexive are the furthest away from this structure.

13. For more on the history of avant garde see P. Adams Sitney, Visionary Films: The American Avant Garde 1943 - 1978. For narration in art cinema see David Bordwell, Narration in Fiction Film. And for discussion of avant garde and feminism see Patricia Mellencamp, Indiscretions: Avant Garde Film, Video and Feminism.

14. Winnett is careful to point out that "incipience, repetition, and closure are reconceived in terms an experience (not *the* experience) of the female body" (509). Maybe because women have more experiences with the body (menstruation, birth, menopause, breastfeeding, [multiple])

orgasm) they are more apt to consider numerous experiences of pleasure, rather than invest all of their pleasure in one act. This also assumes the argument of relating textual pleasure to the body, as Brooks and Winnett do here.

15. Machiorlatti's brackets and addition of "male."

16. Lezlie Hart-Stivale takes this quote from a work by Robyn Warhol (1989) who synthesizes narrative schema of Susan Suleiman (1983). Suleiman draws on Genette as Chatman and Stam, et al. also do here.

17. See the work of Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Helena Cixous, Toril Moi listed in bibliography.

18. See Stam et al. 118-121 or Henderson 5-12 for filmic examples of each form of frequency.

19. Gibson-Hudson refers specifically to Black women in her study here, but I find it relevant to the many women across other differences, but especially to women of color.

CHAPTER FOUR

MYTHIC MEMORY AND FEMINIST NARRATOLOGY

IN THE FILMS OF JULIE DASH

**Julie Dash and the Aesthetics of a Postmodern Griot in
Daughters of the Dust**

In Julie Dash's 1993 film Daughters of the Dust, there is a flashback scene of a group of African American elders seated in the shadows of the setting sun. Nana Peazant (Cora Day Lee), the matriarch of the family, recalls in voice over:

So it was important for the slave hisself to keep the family ties. Just like the African Griot, who would hold these records in he head, the old souls in which family could recollect all de births, deaths, marriages and sales...those 18th century Africans...the watchers...the keepers...the ancestors (Dash 147).¹

This glimpse of history is exemplary of the rich ancestral legacy which Dash incorporates into her films, which include Daughters of the Dust (1993), Praise House (1991), Illusions (1983), and Four Women (1975), among other industrial shorts, music videos and early works. The director invites audiences to witness the cultural memories of African Americans. In her filmmaking, Dash recounts cultural history and visualizes the stories of Americans with African heritage in a cinematic prose that eschews mainstream form, style and representation. Toni Cade Bambara suggests that the film favors "women's perspective, women's validation of women, shared space rather than dominated space" (120), and "the thematics of colonized terrain, family as liberated

zone, women as source of value and history as interpreted by black people are central" (121). One result of this work is that Dash asks audiences to question modes of representation. In doing so, she also creates new cinematic histories and iconography for blacks of the diaspora.

In recent film history, black men have established some visibility in the Hollywood system. Directors like Spike Lee (Do The Right Thing, Malcolm X, Crooklyn), John Singleton (Boyz in the Hood, Poetic Justice), Mario Van Peebles (New Jack City), and Allan and Albert Hughes (Menace II Society) are a few of the directors to have mainstream distribution and studio (financial) recognition. According to Yvonne Welbon, in 1991 450 features were produced and released through the Hollywood system. Of those, twelve were directed by black men, which is indicative of a growing wave of black directed films. However, none of the released films were directed by black women. In fact only a small number of films by black women have had national distribution in this country: Martinique-born Euzhan Palcy's A Dry White Season (1989), Lezlie's Harris' Just Another Girl on the IRT (1993), Julie Dash's Daughters of the Dust, and Darnell Martin's I Like it Like That. Daughters of the Dust, however, was rejected by top Hollywood studios before finally getting funding and initial screening through Corporation for Public Broadcasting's American Playhouse. Independent distributor Kino International now serves as the film's distributor. So although this film received critical acclaim and popularity among audiences, it was not supported

by mainstream Hollywood financial backers.

It would seem that black women are not in the business of creating films based on the statistics thus far. They remain invisible in the Hollywood dream factory except as actresses and film characters. But according to John Williams, black women have a rich legacy in independent filmmaking. Black women have been making films for over two decades from full-length features and documentaries to narrative shorts, experimental documentaries, dramas and docu-dramas. Early pioneers like Kathleen Collins-Prettyman (The Cruz Brothers and Mrs. Malloy, Losing Ground) and Madeline Anderson (Integration Report, Malcolm X: Nationalist or Humanist?, I am Somebody and Walls Came Tumbling Down) led to a second generation of film directors like Alile Sharon Larkin, Julie Dash, Camille Bishops and Zeinabu Irene Davis (Williams 38). ² These women have been productive artists from locations on the margins, absent from commercial cinema but forging an aesthetic sensibility and history. Williams notes that

Although there is no all-embracing esthetic...unifying the productions of black women filmmakers in the U.S., and although their works, oftentimes, share perspectives found in some productions by their male counterparts, their films exhibit an undeniable and compelling racially-gendered world view or zeitgeist (41).

Black women have had to negotiate their roles in an oppressive society, especially those portrayed in mainstream film history. They were stereotypically portrayed as mammies, mulatto women, singers, prostitutes, exotic dancers

and sassy women, pickaninny children, and tragic victims of poverty and abuse. But black women have a validative history of their own that they have been communicating through their own film and video works. Williams writes that

Whatever the genre or style employed, these films by, for, and about black women express the desire to speak the 'unspeakable' about the lives of African American women, making visible much that has heretofore been invisible (41).

The marginal location, bell hooks writes, is the space of resistance and radical possibility ("Choosing the Margin" 20). This is where most independent film operates in both production and reception. Black women filmmakers challenge dominant representation of race and gender. Hooks comments that "to be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body...we look both from the outside in and from the inside out" ("Choosing the Margin" 20). Marginality is "crucial for oppressed, exploited, colonised people" because it is a place where counter hegemonic language and images can develop and circulate ("Choosing the Margin" 21).

Black women filmmakers provide visible, realistic and symbolic representation of black women's history, culture and personal space. And they forge innovative -- politically and culturally consciousness -- aesthetic qualities from which an African American consciousness develops and changes. These women are creating what hooks writes as "fragments of memory which are not simply

represented as flat documentary but constructed to give a 'new take' on the old, constructed to move us into a different mode of articulation" ("Choosing the Margin" 17).

Abena Busia suggests that "storytelling is not only a metaphor for cultural self-possession and wholeness, it is a literal injunction" (199) whereby a complex symbolism communicates "spiritual histories" (204). Storytelling, Busia writes, "like a song singing, becomes cultural metaphor and the carrier of cultural meaning" (210), much like the praisesong -- a "particular kind of traditional heroic poem" (198).

Examining any of these women's films from a feminist narrative perceptive can elucidate this "racially-gendered world view" that Williams writes about. For this chapter, I provide a close critical analysis of Dash's main work, Daughters of the Dust, but I will draw on examples from her other films, where appropriate, to illustrate uses of techniques across the body of her film work. A brief storyline of those films will be included as well. The intersecting methodologies of narrative and feminist criticism can prove useful for any of her films and any of these women artists.

Biographical Notes on Julie Dash:

Black Female Memory as Element of Change

Julie Dash was born and raised in New York City, where she began studying film in 1969 at the Studio Museum of Harlem - Film Production Workshop. A graduate of the City

College of New York and student at the Leonard Davis Center for the Performing Arts in the David Picker Film Institute, she produced her first film in 1973-4 for the New York Urban Coalition, Working Models for Success.³ Dash relocated to Los Angeles to study at the Center for Advanced Film Studies at the American Film Institute as a Producer/Writer Fellow. Here she studied with filmmakers like William Friedkin, Jan Kadar, and Slavko Vorkapich. Her goal, she writes, was to get into the UCLA film school, where she had heard black filmmakers like Charles Burnett, Haile Gerima and Larry Clark were making narrative films.

Once Dash was accepted into the UCLA graduate program, she directed an adaptation of Alice Walker's short story Diary of an African Nun in 1976. The film was screened at the Los Angeles Film Exposition (FILMEX), where she received a Director's Guild Award for Student Film. Her next film, Four Women (1977), is an experimental dance film that received a Gold Medal for Women in Film at the 1978 Miami International Film Festival.

Because independent filmmakers remain economically marginal, they seek jobs in related areas to support their work. Dash's passion for film making, study and viewing is reflected in her work for the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) as board member of the Classifications and Rating Administration from 1978-1980. As one of the six voting board members, she made ratings decisions for the 350 plus movies made each of those years. While with the MPAA, Dash travelled to Europe on several occasions, reviewing

films at the Pinewood Studios in London and attending the Cannes Film Festival in France. At the 1980 Cannes festival, Dash co-sponsored and coordinated a 3-day exhibition of short films by black Americans. Dash also travelled, in 1982, with a delegation of black American independent filmmakers, to attend a film festival linking black American independents with their British counterparts. In 1982 Dash also went to Amiens, France, for The Festival Against Racism.

In 1983, two of her films travelled throughout forty African countries as part of the Black Filmmaker's Foundation (BFF) "American Films: A Touring Exhibition." Dash's films were getting recognition back in America as well, where she received a Fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, a grant from the American Film Institute and several Individual Artist Grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. These grants allowed Dash to continue development of Daughters of the Dust, which she began to work on in 1975, after listening to family stories and phrases and being exposed to a series of James Van Der Zee photographs of black women at the turn of the century (Dash 4). Photography is theme that is continued in Daughters of the Dust. Dash also persisted working on shorter film projects. During this time, Dash directed Illusions (1983) which resulted in a Black American Cinema Society award. She was also honored in Atlanta following the film's screening at the Atlanta Third World Film Festival and Forum, was nominated for a 1988 Cable ACE Award

in Art Direction, and screened the film as part of The Learning Channel's series "Likely Stories," which presented independent fictional works.

Dash moved to Atlanta, Georgia, in 1986, on an American Film Institute/Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences directing apprenticeship to work on Leader of the Band. Dash continued to write for grants and fellowship support to continue her independent work. She also produced several industrial and educational videos for the National Black Women's Health Project and Morehouse School of Medicine to support herself in Atlanta. A Georgia Endowment for the Humanities Grant (1988), Appalshop Southeast Regional Fellowship Grant (1988) and Rockefeller Intercultural Film Fellowship (1989), as well as a fundraiser event sponsored by Women Make Movies, a non-profit film organization in New York City, assisted Dash in her continuing work on Daughters of the Dust, but there was not enough money for a feature length film. Dash began production anyway in the summer of 1987, working with people who volunteered their professional services. After Lynn Holst, Program Director for American Playhouse, saw a trailer for the film, she agreed to support American Playhouse funding of the 113-minute feature at \$650,000, with the Center for Public Broadcasting adding an additional \$150,000. This film was the second in a series, along with Illusions, on black women in history. The next in the series to be directed by Dash is a futuristic film titled Bone, Ash and Rose and is set in 2050.

The second phase of production for Daughters of the

Dust began in August of 1989. While scouting locations, Dash became pregnant and writes that she had two choices

...to put off the production for at least another year or to have an abortion. I made the decision to go forward with the filming of Daughters...This was a painful decision many women have had to face, especially women who must rely on their physical as well as mental stamina to perform professionally ...Daughters would become the child that I would bear that year (10).

With only 28 days to complete principal shooting because of delays caused by Hurricane Hugo, demands of the Sea Island environment, and financial challenges, Daughters of the Dust was photographed and Dash found herself back in Atlanta in her living/editing room in late 1989. To secure distribution for Daughters of the Dust, Dash began showing it on the festival circuit, first at the prestigious Sundance Festival in Utah in 1991. Arthur Jafa (AJ) won the prize for best cinematography. From January through September 1991, Dash showed the film at the Black Light Festival in Chicago, the Munich Film Festival, the Toronto Film Festival, the London Film Festival, and the Festival of Women in Spain. The film evoked strong responses on the festival circuit. Dash writes that "Daughters of the Dust provoked the audience...I had created something important, a film that caused its audience to think and react and come to grips with their own memories" (25). It was also screened on the PBS American Playhouse program. In September of 1991, a small New York company, Kino International, agreed to distribute the film. Kino hired KJM3, a new African American public relations firm, to market the film release

and Dash as its director. Daughters of the Dust opened January 15, 1992, at the Film Forum in New York and quickly moved to a larger theatre to accommodate growing crowds who were reading about Dash and hearing about the film word-of-mouth.

Since the release of Daughter of the Dust, Dash has received such awards as the CEBA Award for Pioneer of Excellence, the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame Award from the Oscar Micheaux Society, the National Black Programming Consortium Best Independent Producer and Best Drama, the Black Oscar, a Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame award for Best Film, the Coalition of 100 Black Women Candace Award -- Trailblazer, the Women in Film Dorothy Arzner award, the American Film Institute Maya Deren Award and has also received a certificate of appreciation for "First feature length film in theatrical distribution by an African American Woman" from Congresswoman Maxine Waters. Daughters of the Dust has its own world wide web site and email address. ⁴ The web site features information on the film, video purchase and film rental, the world of Daughters of the Dust including Julie Dash's filmography, history and influences, "Gumbo Ya Ya," "Potlikker," film awards, and lectures.

Julie Dash is a director who has been working in independent filmmaking for almost three decades and her films represent a unique perspective on black women, history, and film representation, from various stylistic forms. Daughters of the Dust is an excellent film to begin

a study of feminist aesthetics and feminist narratology.

Film Notes: Daughters of the Dust

More than an ethnographic, literal portrayal of blacks at the turn of the century, Daughters of the Dust creates a "mythic memory" where ancestral tradition, spiritual beliefs and the continuation of family is centralized through black women's voices and experiences (Dash 30). It is a costumed drama set in the low-lying chain of sandy islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia known as the sea islands. Today the sea islands are predominantly populated by African Americans who retains many customs from Africa. Its unique culture is known as Gullah.

Through the elder Nana's voice, which I quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Dash speaks as cultural historian. It is in her vocal centrality in Daughters of the Dust that Nana performs the role of the griot in the Peasant family -- the one who "holds the records of old souls." Practicing this, Nana carries a tin can around with her which holds remnants of the ancestors: totems, charms, trinkets and a swatch of hair from her mother. The themes of the past, old and crumbling, comes from a paper written by W.E.B. DuBois, says Dash, "African Americans don't have a solid lineage that they can trace. All they have are scraps of memories. The whole film is about the scraps of memories that these women, these ancestral heiresses, carry around in tin cans and little private boxes" (Boyd 47-8). The film is a small fragment of black women's history, cultural legacy

and interpretative memory. Those who have been relegated to marginality in cinematic history move to the center to claim and own their representation, story and myth.

Like Nana, Julie Dash is the modern storyteller, the griot, who wishes to tell contemporary audiences meaningful stories about African American women, not only their struggles with race, class, and sexual oppression in everyday life, but about family, the relations of women, and personal transformation through knowing one's ancestral legacy. Her filmmaking is a call to action for all people to question the mainstream representation of black women and cinematic tradition. Dash also calls into question the subjugation of black cultural memories, in reality and those portrayed in popular American culture. The narrative legacy being forged by Dash and other filmmakers of color is one of both activism and redemptive visual and spoken memory.

Daughters of the Dust tells the story of the Peasant family who live at the turn of the century (1902) on Dahtaw Island (Gullah for Daughter) off the South Carolina/Georgia coast. The sea islands were one of the dropping points for slave ships that came from Africa, along with Savannah, Georgia; Charleston, North Carolina; New Orleans, Louisiana and many Virginian port cities. According to Dash, "it [the sea islands] became the Ellis Island for the Africans, the processing center for the forced immigration of millions" (6). According to historical record about 400,000 Africans were brought to the North American British colonies and the United States by 1860 (Genovese 57) even though the slave

trade was legally halted in 1808 (Genovese 54). Many more Africans were brought to the colonies, and the Sea Islands, because of their desolate isolation, became a major dropping point. During and after the Civil War, many white plantation owners moved off of the islands to leave slaves and overseers (drivers) to work the plantations. Eugene Genovese writes that "on the Rice Coast of Georgia, resident planters were less common...they might live in Savannah or elsewhere" (11). He adds that "the Sea Island planters would escape during the worst months or even live in Beaufort or Charleston, but they tried to stay close and visit the plantations often" (11). Freed blacks also settled there (Blockson 45). Leon Litwack writes that "early in the war...the sudden appearance of Union warships at the Sea Islands...precipitate a mass exodus of planters and their families (113). After the war, "on the Sea islands, for example, the success of blacks in working the abandoned plantations made them 'objects of attention' to the dispossessed planters, who paid occasional visits to the old places, often to seek material assistance while they waited to reclaim their lands" (Litwack 202).

Dash writes that the Sea Islands "became the region with the strongest retention of African culture, although even to this day influences of African culture are visible everywhere in America" (Dash 6). According to Litwack, "not only did most of the slaves learn to endure but they managed to create a reservoir of spiritual and moral power and kinship ties that enabled them under the most oppressive of

conditions to maintain their essential humanity and dignity" (xii).

The Peasant family has gathered for a picnic, the last celebration of unity, before some of them leave their island home and migrate North in search of their dreams and hope for a better life. The film is situated historically in a time of great change for African Americans who migrated North in vast numbers in search of better education and jobs. The film centralizes the matriarchal lineage as the keeper of family tradition, ancestral memory and custom. Daughters of the Dust is also about disillusion in some ways because a family is physically fracturing with the migration. Some will stay on the home (is)lands and some will move. The ancestral importance of relations and community are being challenged as some of the members plan their move to the North. The ancestors, current Peasant relations, and those yet to be born are all witness to this historical moment of change. And it is recounted in the manner that any of them might narrate to a relation some years in the future, through the ways and mannerisms of the griot.

The role of the griot or Jali in African culture is to maintain a cultural heritage and historical past within the present. "It was also the responsibility of the griot to make sure that the people received all the information about their ancestors -- what the father, the grandparents and their lineages had done and how they had done it" (Goss and Barnes 179). Dash's cinematic lineage is primarily

represented as a matriarchal one, so the griot could also be mother and grandmother. This is represented by the tin cans full of "scraps of memory" that the Peasant women carry in the film. History is not written, but rather becomes an historical record of memory to be orally recollected for future generations.

The griot has many ways of weaving the web of familial storytelling and history holding, so narrative takes on many forms. It is with these same lessons of cultural memory and the pluri-narratorial methods of the griot that Julie Dash weaves her story about African tradition, oral history, women's roles in the cultural continuation of ritual and family. Karen Alexander writes that "the non-linear narrative evokes storytelling in the Griot manner of West African oral cultures, in which memories and objects are invested with meanings from which the story is woven" (226). Quoting Dash, Alexander continues that "'the Griot will come to a birth, a wedding or funeral and, over a period of days, will recount the family's history, with the stories going off at a tangent, weaving in and out and in and out...I decided that Daughters of the Dust should be told that way'" (226). Susan Huddleston-Edgerton adds that this is a film about "translation, an ongoing reinterpretation of events, thoughts, feelings, and sensations past...its utterance sometimes emerges as testimony, sometimes confession, revelation, complaint, nostalgia or ordinary conversation" (342). This memory, translated through cinema involves "the use of symbol, metaphor and myth that are somehow

literalized" and the viewer is called on to witness their own history through glimpses of the history of others.

(Huddleston-Edgerton 340).

Because this film provides methods of storytelling and narratorial structure that call on African and African American tradition from a feminist perspective, it provokes film theorists and critics to incorporate textual analysis from intersecting methodologies, those which consider its cultural and gender influences. This facilitates the unravelling of Daughters of the Dust's multilayered narrative construction, personal and public meaning and ideological/cultural context. When stories are constructed that are different from the mainstream norms -- those with linear, cause-effect and close-ended forms -- methods of film analysis and theory are also questioned.

Film Notes: Illusions

Illusions is also a film told in a unique manner because it is about storytelling itself and considers the cultural, sexual and racial construction and domination that popular culture maintains. The film questions the Hollywood system of constructing films, producing images and manufacturing illusion for mass audiences. It also serves to question the production and maintenance of ideological systems through cinema. Set in 1942, one year after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the location is National Studios, a fictitious Hollywood motion picture studio. Mignon Dupree (Lonette McKee) is a studio executive who has

risen through the professional ranks, as many women did because of the wartime draft. Mignon intends to become a film producer but risks losing everything if her racial identity is discovered. The light-skinned Mignon, who "passes" in the white world is forced to come to grips with her illusion and the use of cinema in wartime Hollywood when she meets Ester Jeeter (Roseann Katon), a black woman who is the singing voice for a white Hollywood movie star. Hiding behind her black veiling, Mignon questions the illusion of the movies when she watches Ester record the "voice" of the actress. Ester becomes just another inanimate musical instrument or prop in the world of cinema fantasy. Suddenly conscious of Ester's treatment in the film industry, Mignon insists that Ester receive a higher wage for her work, although Ester is a non-union performer. She is drawn to the young girl who recognizes Mignon's blackness. Ester reassures Mignon that "they can't tell like we can." Because "blood cannot hide," Mignon is bonded with Ester in some way and thus called to reexamine herself and her role in the creation of illusions. ⁵ Lieutenant Bedford, a Signal Corps officer assigned to National Studios to produce propaganda films for the United States Armed Forces, is attracted to Mignon, who remains aloof to his advances. He sneaks into Mignon's office to read a letter and discovers a photograph from her husband/boyfriend overseas. Knowing her "true identity" Bedford threatens to expose her. This threat appears to be a wake up call to self-identity and transformation for Mignon. At this point, Mignon begins to

realize the power of the motion picture and the stories that need to be told. She also sees the limitations of full expression in cinema because of the color lines that pervade the medium. Just as she has to "pass" for white in a white world, cinema has to "pass" its character's illusions of realism to dominant audiences. Cinema is really just an illusion, but audiences buy into the realism of the dominant ideology. Her emerging racial consciousness will serve as a element of personal and public change.

Film Notes: Four Women (1978) and Praise House (1991)

Both of these films are experimental performance pieces. Four Women is a dance film set to a musical-sound piece by Nina Simone. It starts with a black screen underscored with an audible "Om/Hum", then drumming, African music, and sound effects which continue throughout the entire piece. Dancers come on the screen with scarves, silhouetted by a red spot-backlight. Four dances, performed by the same dancer, Linda (Martina) Young, will be introduced to audiences -- a dark skinned black woman, a "saffron Yellow" black woman, a "tan" woman named "sweetling" and a woman with dark skin and braided hair. The film captures the expressive nature of dance as she move to traditional music, drumming and sound. Dash creates a film of dance that communicates the dancing nature of film itself. According to Valerie Smith, the "stages of dance recapitulate the varieties of the black woman's experience in America" (2). Clyde Taylor echoes this writing that Four

Women "honor[s] the interior complexity of black women, a dimension virtually denied in American cultural expression...this interiority is all the more focused by the absence of narrative and dialogue" (2). As each persona of the dancer expresses a different mood and sensibility through her movement, appearance and dress, the film "authenticates the varieties of experience and personalities, among black women through dispositions of color, movement, and music" (2). According to Phyllis Klotman, Dash had difficulties with the cameraman that worked on this film who "insisted on shooting his way (ignoring her instructions), and it took her hours and hours in the editing room to get it right." ⁶ Many women filmmakers must work within collaborative constraints in advancing a feminist narrative aesthetic.

Praise House is an experimental film commissioned by Alive From Off Center in Minneapolis and done in collaboration with the Urban Bush Women. These women represent the voices of African and diaspora women. The film moves between a "real" narrative in which a young woman is faced with the ability to "vision" spirits like her grandmother to a dream/fantasy where women move through a colorful maze, play among hanging sheets of primary colors and abstract set pieces, and dance in the world of lyrical angels. Lyrical editing, also called "jazz editing," is predominant as Dash's camera moves into the spaces occupied by these dreaming women and editing is structured like jazz improvisation. The jazz aesthetic recognizes that "meaning

is not to be found in time-ordered or causal sequencing," writes Robin Small-McCarthy (293). It asks readers

...to relinquish conventional thought patterns, to participate in the creation of the text by pulling together the seemingly disconnected or random threads of the story, and to go with the flow that may eventually lead to catharsis (Small-McCarthy 293).

Like the post-modern, New World griot, Jazz aesthetics works with polyrhythmic structures, multiple narrators, stream of consciousness visuals, aural sounds and narration and "by the dynamics of memory and rememory" (Small-McCarthy 294).⁷ As in Four Women, color, shape, and motion are interpretive techniques for the music and dance presented in Praise House.

The Feminist Aesthetic, Narrative Voice and Focalization in Daughters of the Dust

The communal and maternal voice refuses centrism and provides space for many to be heard. In the work of Julie Dash, multiple character narrators work as multiple voices and as a unifying Black feminist voice. If there are central characters, they operate in relation to others and give "rise to a spirit of community" (Small-McCarthy 294). Robert Burgoyne writes that a character narrator "may be an active participant in the story he or she relates, or may be a witness to it" (Stam et al. 97). In Daughters of the Dust, the character narrators relate the primary story information about the Peasant migration. In Illusions, the character narrator(s) recount the story which situates a

black female producer in wartime Hollywood at its center. In Praise House and Four Women, the choreography centralizes women and their symbolic voices. Small-McCarthy, suggests that "like jazz audiences"... audiences "become participants in a communal process that (re)creates the text -- a process that can provide a release for those who will allow their intellects to operate in concert with their intuitions and their own (re)memories" (299). ⁸

The character narrators also provide commentary and thus serve subversive functions. Their speaking itself questions dominant ways of expression simply because they have not been "heard" in mainstream film. This subversive function is illustrated through the placement of black women at the center of narrative recounting -- those who speak it. Black women have not had this opportunity in mainstream American cinema. This asks audiences to reconsider black women's iconography and cultural history. Audiences have also not had this opportunity. A second way the character narrators are commentative is illustrated through what they speak. In Daughters of the Dust, they speak of their connection to African ancestors, the history of black women, family connection, and self expression and acceptance. Commentary narration is also exemplified through the portrayal of Gullah culture on the Sea Islands that Dash incorporates. Floyd Webb, who constructed the Daughters of the Dust world wide web site quotes Ronald Daise, Gullah language translator and dialect coach for Daughters of the Dust at length.

Gullah denotes a way of life for a peculiar and special group of African Americans who have maintained the purest forms of African mores in this country...Gullah bonds its speakers with others of the African diaspora. About 90 percent of the vocabulary is English, but the grammatical and international features are largely West African. Our West African forbearers skillfully developed Gullah as a communication system effective enough to make themselves understood in a strange land where even their talking drums (which could transcend cultural and lingual barriers) were prohibited. When the enslaved Africans were brought to the coastal islands off South Carolina and Georgia, their secondary, or trade language, became the dominantly used creole language, known today as Gullah. They've maintained their African-born speech patterns and customs because the unbridged waterways isolated them from the mainlands for many years. ⁹

In Illusions, commentative narration is about black sisterhood, images constructed in mainstream filmmaking, and denial of African heritage in order to pass in an oppressive white world.

Daughters of the Dust is primarily narrated through two characters: Nana, the family matriarch who embodies the ancestral link to the past in the Peazant lineage, and the Unborn Child, who symbolizes those Peazants yet to be born, those who will carry the stories on, much like Dash and her contemporaries.

Nana is the link to the ancestors and the spiritual world. Her physical placement in and the centrality of the ancestral graveyard reinforce this. She talks to her son Eli Peazant (Adisa Anderson):

I visit with Old Peazant every day since the day he die. It's up to the living to keep in touch with the dead, Eli. Man's power

doesn't end with death. We just move to another place, a place where we watch over our living family...Respect your elders! respect your family! Respect your ancestors! (Dash 93).

Nana shares wisdom from beyond the physical world of the sea islands. She comforts Eli, who fears that his wife Eula (Alva Rogers) might be carrying the child of a white man who raped her. Nana speaks from the ancestral knowing, "Eli, you won't ever have a baby that wasn't sent to you....The ancestors and the womb....they're one in the same" (Dash 94). Through the ancestral voice, Nana continues the family link.

Eli! There's a thought...a recollection ...something somebody remembers. We carry these memories inside of we. Do you believe that hundreds and hundreds of Africans brought here on this other side knew? We don't know where the recollections come from. Sometimes we dream them. But we carry these memories inside of we" (Dash 96).

Later in the film, Nana conducts a ritual of remembrance -- called "A Root Revival of Love" in the script notes. She adds a lock of her hair to her mother's hair that she has saved and weaves it into the memory bundle -- called a "hand." Often when African children were born into slavery and taken away from their mothers, all their mothers could do for remembrance was cut a lock of her hair and wrap it in the child's swaddling.

There must be a bond...a connection, between those that go North, and those who across the sea. A connection. We are as two people, in one body. The last of the old, and the first of the new. We will always live this double life, you know, because we're from the sea. We came here in chains, and we must survive...there's salt water in our blood"

(Dash 151).

When Nana completes weaving the "hand" bundle, the family gathers and proceeds to honor the ancestral connection by kissing the hand. "Take my 'Hand.' I'm the one that can give you strength," she says. In the script notes, Dash writes "like those Ibos, Nana Peazant calls upon the womb of time to help shatter the temporal restrictions of her own existence -- to become a being who is beyond death, beyond aging, beyond time" (160). Nana is the narratorial voice of Africa and continuation of familial ties. Busia writes that "the ancestors must be remembered for their continuing protection, and failing to keep their memory alive leads to the destruction of the community" (208). Nana provides narration and that narration voices an African centered cosmology and culture which are not presented as spectacle or stereotype but form the "collective heart in memory" (Busia 209).

As Nana is link to the past, the Unborn Child is the link to the future generations of Peazants. The Unborn Child functions as a primary narrator indicated by her opening remembrances:

My story begins on the eve of my family's migration North. My story begins before I was born. My great great grandmother Nana Peazant, saw her family coming apart. Her flowers to bloom in a distant frontier..." (Dash 80).

Like Nana, the unborn child operates as an intradiegetic narrator -- within the story world. Her presence however is that of a spirit, inside and outside of space and time as

she simultaneously recounts it. Busia writes that "the scattering of African peoples" is articulated "as a trauma - - a trauma that is constantly repeated anew in the lives of her lost children" (197). The Unborn child is the lost child who comes to her parents -- Eli and Eula -- only after Nana calls upon the ancestral souls to guide her home to the womb. Her spirit presence is the continuation of African ancestry.

There are other women and men who provide voice to the Peasant history -- Eula, Haagar, Viola, Yellow Mary, Eli -- among others. These secondary character narrators are the "present" day Peasants, those who live somewhere between the ancestors and the future. They are the diasporic people of the in-between, connected to a legacy of the past but with their eyes on the future hope of more tolerant and humane lives. Although these characters do not offer first person narratorial address, they serve as character narrators in that their presence in the diegetic world lends to the narration of story events. It is their voicing of story events that results in their being called narrators, albeit not primary ones.

Two great-granddaughters of Nana return from the mainland for the family's historic event. They are Viola (Cheryl Lynn Bruce) and Yellow Mary (Barbara O.). Both represent the "progressive" (Anglo) end of modernity's continuum. Viola is a Christianized missionary who tries to spread the word of a Eurocentric God to the family. Viola has become what Joseph White and Thomas Parham call an

"alien" to her ancestral lineage (47), cloaking her primal fears in a Christianized religion. Yellow Mary is the wayward daughter. Her name, "Yellow Mary," translated from Yemaya, means the "mother of the sea, the mother of dreams, the mother of secrets" (Dash 76). But the name also invokes the conflict of the 'high yellows' versus the 'black berries,' or colorism in the African American community (Boyd 46). Her light skin allowed her to find a place on the mainland as a wet nurse and prostitute.¹⁰ Although thought of as a prosperous, assimilated woman by her family peers, she is obviously oppressed in white society because, like Eula, she also suffered the experience of rape by a white man and by Anglo culture. Yellow Mary, along with Viola, is experiencing what White and Parham discuss as a black person's struggle with "a set of dualities defined by being a part of, yet apart from, American society, in it but not of it, included at some level and excluded at others (46). In the Souls of Black Folks (1903), W.E.B. DuBois coined the cultural and historical dilemma as "a kind of twoness, a double consciousness created by a confluence of African-American and Euro-American, Black and White realities going on inside of that person at the same time" (White and Parham 47).

Viola brings Mr. Sneed (Tommy Hicks), an anthropologist-photographer, to record the family's last moments on the island and passage to the mainland. He embodies DuBois' notion of the "talented-tenth" African American who becomes assimilated into the dominant (white)

culture and citified in his mannerisms and beliefs. Mr. Sneed also illuminates DuBois' notion of the double consciousness that some African American's experience, balancing somehow between two cultural and personal identities. Sneed moves from Samaj's description of an alienated man to a collective (Afrocentric) man during his visit to the island (White and Parham 47-8). Sneed becomes more fascinated with the old African ways, seeking out elders who recall the old "salt water negro' stories. He unleashes his emotions and passions as he kisses Viola on the lips in his new found elation and freedom. Sneed also willingly and enthusiastically kisses Nana's conjure hand upon the final farewell by the family even though he is not a Peasant. He witnesses the ancestry he has denied and is personally transformed.

Yellow Mary's companion, Trula, is an even lighter skinned black woman who remains a mysterious and quiet character. Her presence signifies the silencing and simultaneous eroticization of women of color. Yellow Mary and Trula's enigmatic relationship suggest a homoerotic closeness, a poignant detail considering that they have been commodities for exchange among men (and women) on the mainland. It was often the case that prostitutes were bisexual, Dash notes, taking same sex lovers (66).

One of the stronger proponents of the migration is Haager (Kaycee Moore), who married into the Peasant family. She renounces her African heritage as "hoodoo," and like Viola lives in a state of angry ancestral denial.

Historically this reflects the feelings of many Sea Islanders who did not like to admit their connection with the Sea Island Gullah people/culture. "For a long time, it was an insult to be Gullah or Geechee, because it was so closely associated with African ties. It meant that you were ignorant, you had a strange accent, you practiced magic," Dash explains about the generation whose goal was assimilation (Thomas and Saalfeld 25). Haagar's daughter, Iona, has a Native American lover with whom she chooses to remain on the island against her mother's wishes. St. Julian Last Child is the only person we see in the film that is of non-African descent. His presence suggests the parallel between African and Native Americans and their treatment by white culture. Bell hooks addresses interracial relationships and "the common way" between oppressed peoples in "Native Americans, African Americans and Black Indians," (1992), noting that interracial relationships were common and that many African Americans have native ancestry. He was named St. Julian Last Child because he signifies one of the last Cherokee children to be born on the sea islands when his people were forced to leave for settlement (internment) in Western reservations (concentration camps). This is where Dash begins to veer from historical accuracy. The Cherokee were moved to Oklahoma in 1838 and it is thought that they were moved because they began to own plantations and use (black) slave labor. Some Cherokee were becoming too assimilated into the white man's way and making economic gains. This caused

governmental reaction. The government's answer -- forced migration out of the sea islands to the West. If the film is set in 1902 and St. Julian Last Child was the last Cherokee child to be born on the Island, he would be in his sixties. The character, however, is in his twenties. There could have been a few Cherokees hiding out on the Sea Islands after the forced move, however Dash modifies history here to make a symbolic point. Wanting to illustrate a connection between native Americans and black Americans, Dash utilizes temporal poetic license to have a character present for story purposes. At what point in creating her mythic memory, does Dash have to be accountable to accurate historical record? Possibly Dash questions accuracy in historical record, knowing that black women have been left out and victimized by that dominant history.

Dash herself states that St. Julian Last Child is positioned as a third generation descendent of the "Last Child" family. His family having been given the name when they resisted marching West in 1838. The name Last Child is symbolic of their becoming maroons -- the last children of the Cherokee Nation holding out. ¹¹

Dash also notes that she did not try to modify history, but rather to address another face of the retention process in Native American culture. This is not completely clear from the film, but rather it is a part of the constructive/collaborative narration process that Dash and the Daughters of the Dust crew experienced. Dash adds that "this subplot is developed even further in [her] upcoming book, Geechee Recollections, Tales from 'Daughters of the Dust'." In the

book she takes a look at "St. Julian Last Child's fragmented family, decedents of those who refused to march West, those who scattered out among the Sea Islands." Her role as a historian and cultural critic are clear.

Eula, Eli's wife, is closely associated with Nana as she practices similar ancestral beliefs -- a jar under her bed with a note to the ancestors, newspaper print on the wall, etc. It is her pregnancy that allegorically calls our attention to the "cultural rape and violation" of slavery and colonialism (Thomas and Saalfield 191). Not only are people oppressed as individuals, but their ancestral lineage has also been the victim of annihilation. The presence of the Unborn Child, however, calls to the persistence of African Americans both physically and spiritually, despite literal raping, selling, and brutalization of African peoples. And traditionally black women have had to deal with the realities of "being ruined" as part of their lives and psyches. The word "rape" is never used in the film, suggesting a silent, but prevalent scar that many black women (and men) wear in their lineage. The Unborn Child eventually comes to Eula's womb through an on screen superimposition effect. Eula represents the continuation of the Peasant family and like her child straddles both the sacred world of the ancestors and the secular world of the sea islands. African ancestry is restored and the legacy of black womanhood begins to be healed.

Eula and Eli are both transformed on the spiritual level in Daughters of the Dust. Their belief system matures

through Nana's guidance and prayer. Eula's transformation into a spiritual matriarch continues throughout the film because she feels the presence of the ancestors as the child is called and comes to her. This transformation crescendos at the family meal. She pleads with the family members to love one another despite their differences. Womanhood has been forever tarnished by rape, both literal and figurative, by white men (and Western culture). Eula calls for a new understanding of what it means to be a woman.

As far as this place is concerned, we never enjoyed our womanhood...deep inside, we believed that they ruined our mothers, and their mothers before them. And we live our lives always expecting the worst because we feel we don't deserve any better...You think you can cross over to the mainland and run away from is? You're going to be sorry, sorry if you don't change your way of thinking before you leave this place...there's going to be all kinds of roads to take in life...Let's not be afraid to take them. We deserve them, because we're all good women (Dash 156-7).

Through Eula's character narration, the unifying black feminist perspective is emphasized. Character narrators can be both active participants in the story world, they can comment on it or witness it. Eula is a witness of her own history and the Peasant's as well and communicates that as an intradiegetic character through dialogue and monologue. A mirror is held up for audiences to look into. Black women's identity, sexuality and lineage are what is reflected in that mirror. By facing those images, healing begins on many levels. Cade-Bambara writes that "Dash's sisters-seeing-eye-to-eye ritual has its antecedents in

Illusions," when "Mignon stands in solidarity with Ester" (140-141). Mignon only comes to know herself after associating with black sisterhood and facing her own racial identity. And in Praise House, "the feminine principle is advanced as divine; one of several breathtaking moments involve dance lifts of sisters by sisters" (Cade-Bambara 141).

The range of character narrators in the film represents the very diversity that exists among all people whether it be within family units, regional or cultural communities or globally. Although there is love and respect among the Peasant women, it is allegorically tenuous. There are some who pass judgement on one another. Viola and Haagar are quick to offer their criticisms and opinions about family members. Viola names Nana "an old salt water negro" and "heathen." Haagar asks "what that she got with her?" and "what is this?" of Yellow Mary's light skinned companion. She refers to Trula as a thing, not a person. The women are also quick to judge Yellow Mary, calling her a "shameless hussy" because of her profession on the mainland. But in their isolation (both physical and spiritual), these Gullah women do not know the racist oppression that continues to permeate life on the mainland. Rather, they see the mainland as a land of promise, where dreams can be fulfilled and endless opportunity awaits. These travellers have yet to experience the two-ness or double consciousness of black identity in the white dominated world, as well as lynching, Jim Crow laws, race rebellions, police brutality, job

discrimination, and separatism.

The judgements that these character narrators pass upon others illuminate larger issues of human difference. Judgementalism underscores the thematic conflicts of old versus new, modern versus traditional, isolation versus assimilation, and Western versus African. One thought lingers: how are we to understand the diversity of our world if we cannot accept it within our own family?

It is through all female characters as well as some of the peripheral male characters that Dash evokes a feminist aesthetic. Through character narration, the film calls us to rethink who we are. The text speaks to the image of black women in an oppressive society. But, it is a testament of healing for these and other women. The feminist aesthetic also recognizes multiple voices within the community -- the extended family -- which includes persons outside of our immediate blood relations. Ancestral community, the matriarchal lineage and connection are emphasized. Dash's feminist aesthetic also induces reflection about collective memory so that life is understood as a process on a continuum or circle. Memory is redemptive and regenerative.

The Gullah Language and Historical Voice(s)

By using this historically African-English language of the sea islanders, Dash invites audiences to enter that world -- one that mainstream film goers have had little or no opportunity to hear. Daughters of the Dust exemplifies

subversive narration because the language is historical and culturally authentic, albeit fairly inaccessible to many viewers upon one viewing. According to Margaret Wade-Lewis (1991), The Gullah (Geechee) language was thought to originate from "archaic 17th and 18th century British dialects modified by some form of 'baby talk' used by overseers" (10). White culture did not want to acknowledge that any African-ness was retained among the slave population and their descendants. To further subjugate African Americans, this creolized language was ridiculed, ignored and then studied from a traditional Eurocentric framework. "The prevailing assumption before 1949 was that native African languages had been eradicated, that Africans in America had neither retained African languages nor influenced English" (Wade-Lewis 10). It was not until African-American linguist Lorenzo Dow Turner located African language retention in Gullah, and the Yoruba culture in Brazil, that African influence in this language was acknowledged by mainstream culture. In his pivotal study, Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect (1949), Dow Turner proved that the Gullah language was a diasporic, hybrid language that resulted in the blending of several regional groups of Africans during the slave trade. The language, customs, and beliefs of these Africans closely resemble those of the Ibo, Yoruba, Kongo, Mandinka and other West African tribes from whom they probably descended (Blockson 740). The Gullah tradition provides one of the closest links to Africa for American diasporic blacks. There are also several direct

links to African language in the film. In a scene at the beach, one Peasant elder woman is preparing food and has a circle of children around her. She is naming the African words she remembers and the children repeat them. Holding up okra, the woman asks "Now this means?" and the children reply "Gumbo...Pot called?...Sojo...Water?... Deloe... Fire?...Diffy." In the graveyard scene with Eli and Nana, she calls him "Gooberhead." "Goober," she says, "that mean peanut." And in a flashback scene to the slave era, Shad Peasant, Nana's husband, sing-counts cubes of dried indigo in his own language while a child watches and learns. We hear "Eena!..., Meena!..., Myna!..." This cuts to a scene on the beach in current time with the children looking at a wish book (catalog). Haagar says to a small boy, "You've got to go like this. Eenie, Meenie, Miney Moe..." The remnants of African language sometimes persist without our conscious knowledge.

In addition to character narrators which are intradiegetic, we can also consider cinematic narration which operates exclusively on an extradiegetic level as the "primary narratorial or discursive activity flowing from the medium of cinema itself, it is 'that which narrates the entire film'" (Stam et al. 103). Robert Burgoyne has discussed some of the debates about cinematic narration. He identifies narration as personal and impersonal. Personal narration is the narration of character narrators like Nana, Eula, Yellow Mary, and the Unborn Child. These narrators do not create the fictional world, they report or recount it as

witness or participant like the unborn child who says "I remember, and I recall".¹² The cinematic or impersonal narrator however "both creates or constructs the fictional world while at the same time referring to it as if it has as autonomous existence, as if it pre-existed the illocutionary act" (Stam et al. 117). Burgoyne adds that diegetic narratives "analogize film to a type of rhetoric, discourse or a quasi-linguistic form of enunciation" (Stam et al. 104). Cinematic elements like music, voice, props, location, lighting, color, camera distance and angle, mise-en-scène, and editing type or rhythm are what Seymour Chatman calls "communicating devices" or encoded cues which the viewer then uses to "reconstruct the film's narrative" (Coming to Terms 127, 134).

The overall cinematic narration in Daughters of the Dust communicates an African sensibility and ancestral practice -- including African symbolism, Gullah ritual, cooking, dialect, and sounds of field cries mixed with African influenced music. Story material is recounted through a sense of ancestral memory. The film also narrates with a sense of communal/maternal space, with women holding central roles in the family continuation. The film's cinematic narration serves an ideological function by foregrounding women's experiences and placing women centrally in the narrative aural and visual space. The cinematic narration confirms a sense of history, connection, and memory.

In examining cinematic narration in Daughters of the

Dust, it is important to discuss focalization. These two components often work together in the "telling" and "showing" of the story material. Gerard Genette suggests that the difference between narration and focalization is the difference "between the agent who recounts or presents the fictional world to the spectator and the agent within the diegesis who serves as a kind of lens or medium through which the events and the other characters are perceived" (Stam et al. 91). Voice (narration) is the metaphorical or literal voicing of the story material. Focalization is "the angle of vision from which the life or the action is looked at" (Stam et al. 88). It can be from specific diegetic characters' points of view (fixed, variable or multiple internal focalizers), both optically or psychologically. Focalization can also be external as illustrated by some of the secondary and/or "extra" characters who are portrayed visually, have secondary status as character narrators, and known simply by words or actions. We get little emotive representation -- of feelings or thoughts -- through their narration. Focalization can also be non-focalized which might be thought of as omniscient narration. This category is limited because "film almost invariably employs characters as channels of narrative information, and makes especially heavy use of internal focalization as a means of displacing narrative agency to the characters" (Stam et al. 91). When there is no character point of view of focalization, the cinematic narrator is delegated with this function.

In Daughters of the Dust, focalization is at first thought to be filtered entirely through the Unborn Child, who at the beginning indicates that this is her story, and her telling of it. But the story moves through other focalizers and modes of narration, so the story becomes a compilation of many stories (many focalizers) she has heard passed down to her. The multiple perspectives through various focalizing agents make up the whole of the film. One Peasant is understood as part of the whole. The film thus serves as a memory from before her birth. It is not ethnographically "accurate" but will serve as an ethnographic myth, through several narrators over time. The commentative omniscient focalizer, cinematic narrator, seems to take over much of the narration as it forwards women's images as central to cultural retention, reminds audiences of the importance of Africanisms in the Sea Islands, foregrounds the importance of land or surrounding social space, and provides communal spatial arrangements.

There are several cinematic techniques and specific scenes I would like to discuss to illustrate cinematic narration. Some of the principal techniques used in the film which indicate an overarching aesthetic commentary are wide angle, deep focus shot composition, which foregrounds the landscape; slower motion film speeds to evoke a sense of mystery/memory/metaphysics; social or group mise-en-scene arrangement rather than a privileging one (hero) character; dissolves as transition (editing) devices to indicate relations and memory; and music and sound with an African

sensibility. Analysis of three of the film's sequences illustrates the feministic narrative aesthetic working in Dash's film.

The first of these sequences is the film's opening segment which begins in slow speed of the hands of a black woman holding soil which blows slowly away, underscored by a music sound track which chants the Ibo phrase for "remember" (Dash xii). The next visual is of Nana Peazant washing herself in the sea fully clothed. The voice over says:

I am the first and I am the last. I am the honored one and the scorned. I am the whore and the holy one. I am the wife and the virgin. I am the barren one and many are my daughters. I am the silence that you can not understand. I am the utterance of my name.

This passage, taken from the Black Gnostic Gospels, illustrates conceptual/collaborative narration that I introduced in chapter three and will later explicate in this chapter. The authorial narration works with the visual/aural aspects of cinematic narration to introduce us to a primary narrator and to recollection of the past. The shot dissolves to reveal a woman standing proud on the prow of a boat, veiled in flowing mesh and wearing a St. Christopher charm. The charm foreshadows its use later in the "hand" that Nana will construct in the ritual "A Root Revival of Love." In the script Dash notes that the St. Christopher icon comes from a "syncretism of religion -- the Yoruba God of 'Bacoso,' founder of destiny" (116). Text comes on the screen -- IBO LANDING 1902 -- which grounds the film in a cultural and mythic context. Dash writes that

"myth is very important in the struggle to maintain a sense of self and to move forward into the future" (30). The Ibo (Egbo) story is told twice in this film. "Ibo Landing conjures up a story still told both in the Carolina Sea Islands and in the Caribbean" (Cade-Bambara 130)¹³. The film also has two more text screens which provide historical information on the Sea Islands and Gullah culture. This narratorial device further situates the film in real socio-historical-cultural context.

A shot overlooking the sea at daybreak reveals Bilal Muhammed performing his morning prayer in Arabic. According to Dash, this is where she symbolically modified historical fact.

Bilal was an African captive who died long before 1902, however, his five daughters were probably alive around the turn of the century. He was a fascinating individual whose hand written "Koran" is on permanent display at the Smithsonian. Dramatically, it was important that this specific character interact with the Peazant family, so I pulled him through time, a younger man than he would have been if he had survived.¹⁴

Bilal's Muslim practice also foreshadows Nana's ancestral "hoodoo" practice which both divide and unite the family later in the film. Bilal appears to have the first optical point of view shot as we see him, then cut to a motivated shot looking out to sea, across to Africa. The theme of "passage" or "crossing over" is introduced here and remains a strong element throughout the film -- whether it be crossing over to Africa or the mainland United States. On the riverbank are Viola and Mr. Sneed, waiting for the boat.

The second point of view shot is given to Viola who notices Yellow Mary in the boat. A reaction shot also indicates psychological focalization, as she appears surprised to see her wayward relative show her face back on the islands. The audience "reads" Viola's signifying facial reaction to understand the psychological or emotional slant of the shot series.

Once these characters are in the boat the shot composition varies. Although they appear to be constructed in the classic shot-reverse shot manner, the sequence of shots are not focalized through any one character, but rather through the cinematic narrator and multiple-variable character focalizers intermittently. This is indicated because the shot composition varies from two-shots to close up one-shots at variable angled positions to reaction shots. Rarely do the images appear the same. The cinematic narration suggests a sense of intimacy on the boat, uncomfortable for Viola and Mr. Sneed who are symmetrically and rigidly framed, and with a sense of playfulness for Yellow Mary and her companion Trula who sit close, touch one another and are framed off center. Music comes under to suggest a shift in narration, as is the case throughout most of the film.

Music and sound effects are the extradiegetic narratorial techniques with which a temporal or narratorial shift is indicated. Musical cues often suggest who is going to narrate or what will be narrated. For example, right before the Unborn child character narrator speaks or appears

on screen, music comes up. John Barnes scored the Unborn child's theme

...in the key of B, the key of Libra, representing balance and justice. This character was coming into the world to impart justice, a healing upon her father and her mother and her family (Dash 16).

In a similar manner, Nana's Theme is "in the key of A, representing the Age of Aquarius, or the new age that was imminent for Nana's family" (Dash 16). The manner in which music is used to indicate character, scene or content reflects cinematic narration, but the manner in which it was composed and understood by viewers on a metatextual level is indicative of conceptual/collaborative narration. Dash notes that Barnes used various instruments to represent an Afri-centric perspective including "the synclavier, the Middle Eastern santour, African bata drums and African talking drums, and he successfully mixed synclavier-based percussion with authentic music from Africa, India, and the Middle East" (16). She notes that his spiritual and metaphysical beliefs also influenced the work. In addition to The Unborn Child's and Nana's Themes, Barnes composed the closing theme called the "Elegba Theme" in the key of Taurus, D sharp or E flat, to represent the key of the Earth, the element which rules the astrological sign of Taurus. "The lyrics, 'Ago Elegba...show the way, Elegba,' he says, are about people who are moving forward after having been given love and dignity, and who are now facing the crossroads" (Dash 16). Conceptual and collaborative narration adds something to the filmic text that is not

signified in a familiar or conventional manner. It is something remembered, something felt on a metaphysical "recollection" plane. Or, it is something known to a viewer who has a prior knowledge of the textual context, or researches to acquire that knowledge, bringing it to the viewing experience. Music and sound illustrate how an auditory (or visual) element can work on a variety of narratorial levels, much like voice can be character narrated story material and political resistance in the same instance.

As the small boat makes its way down the murky green and brown water passage, music, drums, and singing come up. The Unborn child introduces herself, "My story begins..." as we see the family living area, where we see the frizzled chickens, conjure bags attached to shanties, newspaper print attached to the wall to ward off evil, and the bottle tree to recollect ancestors past much like our contemporary photo albums. The camera also begins to show the Peazants who inhabit these spaces -- Myown, the newlyweds, the children, Eula and Eli, Iona, Haager. As the camera moves closer, a glass of water containing flowers and dried herbs is revealed. Dash notes in the script that this is a manner to send a message to a deceased person. Later we learn that Eula "talked to her mom." The descriptive camera signifies a memory of the Unborn child to audiences, who received glimpses of the spiritual and ancestral practices of her family. But as audience members, we are privileged to witness those memories through a narrator somewhere beyond

the physical recollection of one person. This sequence, albeit focalized partially through one character, provides more information to the audience than appears to the characters in the diegetic world. The cinematic narrator often privileges the audience's "witnessing" of story events.

A cut takes viewers back to the barge floating down river with a point of view shot focalized through Yellow Mary's perspective. She looks through a Kaleidoscope which Mr. Sneed brought on the trip. His fascination with seeing or sight is indicated here as well as in his role as "ethno-anthropologist" for the family picnic. Dash's script notes that his role and interest in "the old way" is an homage to Bill Gunn, director of Ganja and Hess, in a later scene (117). She also writes that Sneed "represents the viewing audience" (38) because of his photographic, ethnographic function. His literal optical focalization captures image-glimpses of this family for another audience's viewing pleasure. But his photographs become the "scraps of memory" that the Peazants will pass along to future generations.

Joel Brouwer notes that

The kaleidoscope is an apt metaphor of Dash's own project in making the film. As she told reporter Kevin Thomas, 'I wanted to take the African-American experience and rephrase it in such a way that, whether or not you understood the film on the first screening, the visuals would be so haunting it would break through with a freshness about what we already know.' By twisting the kaleidoscope of 'what we already know' about the African American experience, Dash has created a new way of seeing, and reading, that experience (1).¹⁵

Brouwer argues that the film is about "ways of seeing" (7) and that "our perceptions are limited by what the director chooses to show us, but they are also distorted literally and figuratively by the limitations of angles, lenses, and framings" (7). The idea of discursive choices is an obvious component of cinema construction, but what those choices then signify in the framework of a complete text is within the realm of narratology. Dash gives us one story, one of the first redemptive stories about African American women which is both realistic and impressionistic. We recognize it as one view among many, but the view remains a significant construction because of its mythic symbolic address. Quoting Hayden White, Brouwer suggests that we "recognize that there is no such thing as a single correct view of any object under study but that there are many concurrent views, each requiring its own style of representation" (2). History (capital "H") is understood as interpretations of various histories. Dash intertextualizes this notion with the presence of Sneed who will record one family's history within her interpretive "historical" record of the Peazants. Even though Dash is meticulous, in many respects to include accurate portrayals of African American history, she provides only one interpretation to build an impressionistic, mythic quality of storytelling. The film is so visually and audible attractive, that viewers, as many cinema audiences do, presume the film is historically accurate. The story is a form of truth that has not been portrayed on the screen, but it is only one interpretation

of truth. Some distancing is required by viewers between the historical, realistic filmic portrayal and the mythic impressionistic construction. This re-insertion of black women's history is a feminist aspect, yet Dash is also accountable on some level in the creation of inaccuracies to support redemptive myths of black women. Is there historical integrity in myth making? Or does myth serve a larger function of self-identification, personal transformation and re-visioning the history of dominant culture? Dash seems to accomplish both myth and realism in Daughters of the Dust.

The barge's trip down the river to the island continues with a transitional cut from the boat/barge to the water revealing a carved wooden statue, the head and torso of an African, floating in the water. The figurehead is a prow of a old slave ship. This recollects the slave trade, still prevalent in the Sea Islands after the United States "outlawed" it. The figurehead recollects the Ibo Story as well. Cinematic narration reveals the Ibo myth in visualized form. The music and talking drums continue. A dissolve takes us to the family graveyard. This dissolve indicates a connection, between the figurehead and the ancestors. It also links the old and the new because it floats in the water that carries the Peazants home for the picnic and then later away to the mainland. Later in the film, Eli and Eula will again encounter the wooden African statue in a ritual of ancestral possession. The scene proceeds to the family graveyard with a slow pan that serves

as cinematic description, revealing grave sites covered with seashells, bottles, pots, pans, old dishes and other personal effects of the deceased (Dash 85).

The sequence continues to introduce us to Peazant characters. Iona Peazant finds a letter under her door from a Native American man, St. Julian Last Child. She reads the letter in voice over while the visuals move. He is seen with a black family gathering moss and Iona herself opening her secret "memory" box to reveal a beaded piece of Native Jewelry. Dash's script notes explain that "scraps of memories...through them we came to know our mothers, grandmothers, and family history. And finally to know ourselves" (88). As Iona continues to read the letter which pleads with her to stay on the island, the visuals take us to the beach/picnic area, back to Eula in her shanty, to Eli greeting St. Julian Last Child, to the Newlyweds near the beach, to Iona with a group of Peazant girls. The identity of the person voicing off screen is confusing because it runs throughout so many different visuals. Whose voice is it? It could be any of the Peazant women. Through a fixed vocal focalizer (Iona) but an omniscient visual narrator, the family is tied together as if in a web. Ironically, it is the words of St. Julian Last Child that tie them together. His entry into the family is foreshadowed. Culminating this sequence is a slow zoom into Iona, which punctuates the importance of her connection to the young Native American and the reading of his letter. A cut to a close up of St. Julian Last Child sitting in the crook of a

tree connects him to her and to her family . She completes the letter, "Signed, St. Julian Last Child. Son of the Cherokee Nation, Son of these islands we call Dahtaw, Ossaboaw, Kiwa, Wassaw, Paris, and Santa Helena." A slow zoom out reveals St. Julian in the tree. We see the grandeur of the tree and his body as part of it. He becomes profoundly connected with the tree branches as the camera moves out.

Bell hooks comments on Dash's romanticization of a Native American character in this scene. She says to Dash that

One of the real problems for those of us who write about Native culture, or African American agrarian culture, is how to break with the romantic image, but how to also speak the truth of that spirit. Spirit of unity....there is that attempt to restore the integrity of being to the idea of being one with nature (48).

Dash's response to why she placed this character in the tree again illustrates the importance of conceptual and collaborative narration which works both with and outside the realm cinematic narration. She explains that when she saw the tree, while on location, it was so magnificent that she HAD to use it in the film. She wrote a scene in which a character (Nana or St. Julian) appeared in the tree, "sprouting from nature, evoking all the symbols and icons, with the roots at the bottom and the light and the fog and the sunrise and all that" (48). Her decision to place St. Julian Last Child there was motivated by the fear of Nana (Cora Lee Day) falling out of the tree. What could be read

as a romanticized scene was actually constructed because of a directorial aesthetic decision which happened once on location. The scene can be read one way, considering cinematic narration, and another way, if we appraise it through collaborative narratorial construction. Dash's use of the poetics of her surroundings suggests that all seemingly "romanticized" stereotypical portrayals or elements within a film may not be from a condescending intention as a director. This raises the question of who can portray or represent whom and in what manner without being judged as romanticizing or stereotyping. This slow zoom out, which reveals the connection of human beings to nature, ends the first sequence and establishes the main characters that inhabit the Peasant's diegetic world.

The cinematic narrator functions to reveal human relationships to nature and land as well as ancestral practices, knowledge, music and song. It also weaves a web of connection amongst the members of the Peasant family. Multiple focalizers reinforce the connection to each other because no one person is given a privileged optical point of view or psychological or emotional filter with which the story material is recounted. The use of multiple focalizers and the limited use of fixed (individual character) point of view shots illustrates Dash's focus on communal space, and non-hierarchical narratorial style.

A second sequence that deserves attention is the ancestral graveyard scene which is primarily focalized through Nana Peasant. She also occupies the main

narratorial character voice space. Nana and Eli are in the graveyard discussing the family's decision to leave their island home. Nana is focused on cleaning her husband's grave site and connecting with the old souls, while Eli is concerned with the cross over to the mainland and the rape of his wife Eula. There is a cross-cut to the beach site where the younger Peazant women are singing and dancing to a ring-and-line game. The scene continually cross cuts back and forth from beach to graveyard. Through cinematic narration, spatial and temporal relationships are established. There is temporal simultaneousness with spatial distance. But the use of cross cuts suggests connection across space, even time. The natural sound from the beach stays under the scene with Nana and Eli. Music comes up after Eli hands Nana a fist full of tobacco. This suggests a shift in narration. Upon this motion, the focalization appears to shift from an omniscient narrator to emotional focalization through Nana as she assumes the voice of ancestral legacy. She speaks seriously about (or to) the ancestors, "It's up to the living to keep in touch with the dead." As the voice over continues, we move visually back to the beach dance which has become more intense. The shot shows Myown moving in sync with Nana's voice..."Respect your elders! Respect your family! Respect you ancestors!" When one part of the family web moves, the other reacts. These scenes are in different physical locations, but the family ties are communicated through cross cutting, matched framing and synced intraframe movement. Tension elevates in the

conversation between Eli and Nana. When she speaks of his baby coming to Eula's womb, the shots of the women on the beach are in a slower speed. "Those in this grave, like those who're across the sea, they're with us. They're all the same," Nana pleads. Myown is now possessed in trance dance, reminiscent of Voodoo religious culture in West Africa, as the music becomes louder and works toward a climax. Real time is questioned as ancestral time, existing on a continuum, has "taken" over like the spirit that takes over a physical body in the voodoo trance (possession) dance. Eli doubts Nana's words. She retorts, "Eli....Eli! There's a thought...a recollection...something somebody remembers. We carry these memories inside of we...I'm trying to teach you how to touch your own spirit...Call on those old Africans, Eli. They'll come to you when you least expect them." At the beach both Myown and Iona are taken into spiritual possession as we continue to hear Nana's voice. In the culmination of imparting this ancestral wisdom, the beach scene dissolves back to Nana in the family graveyard. As the one shot slowly fades into the other, Nana appears to hold the younger women on the beach in her cupped hands. She holds the souls of the living in the presence of the dead. The cinematic narration here suggests that without consciousness the women are wrapped with protection by their ancestor's hands. The women are not afraid to be "taken" by possession into the hands of the old souls. Connection is made.

The technical sequencing -- which includes the rise of

music and sound effects, slow motion film speed, variable camera perspectives and cross cutting or cross-dissolves -- is illustrative of the series of techniques that are used in the film to indicate narratorial change. They also indicate when the theme of ancestral knowledge or memory is recalled. The technical sequencing indicates a character's growing knowledge of, or reinforcement of, what is present in collective memory. Rising music, sound effects and slow film speed also signify the presence of the Unborn Child, whether she is moving into the screen scene space or while she is onscreen, visible to the audience but primarily invisible within the diegetic world. She occupies ancestral-spirit space.

The Unborn child's presence is known to a few characters in the diegetic world -- either by sight or by sensation. Following the graveyard scene Nana stands on the beach. A great wind blows suddenly, and sensing her presence, Nana says "Come, child, come." A reaction shot suggesting an optical point of view seeing the child shows Nana nodding her head and smiling. Eli senses the child after he is nearly trampled by a herd of wild mustangs. He senses her in the graveyard as the horse sounds fade and music comes up. And as the Peasant children are looking through a stereoscope (viewer) and at tabloid newspapers and wishbooks (catalogs), the Unborn child looks through the viewer and a point of view shot reveals moving newsreel footage of the crowded cities of the North. As she narrates "It was an age of beginnings, a time of promises," she is

privileged to see what will be the moving memories of the mainland. A young boy, Ninnyjuns, plays with her hair as if he sees her. The unclouded imaginations of children allow for clear spiritual presence. Mr. Sneed also sees the Unborn Child. He is arranging the Peasant men to be photographed. There is a space next to Eli. As the Unborn child narrates, "I remember how important the children were to the Peasant family...and how I had to convince my daddy that I was his child," Mr. Sneed looks through the camera and sees the young girl next to her daddy. He jumps back, startled, to see the empty space by Eli. Sneed sees/feels the presence of the spirit child as he grows closer to his African heritage. The photographs he takes will become remnants of memory to hold onto the ancestors. He is already connected to family legacy. Although the Unborn Child moves in and out of the diegesis, the cinematic narration privileges the audience by visually showing us the Unborn Child as she moves through and remembers this special day.

Cinematic narration connects Mr. Sneed to the learning of ancestral legacy when he speaks to Viola about the "geechee" ways and the children in a later scene. She has hidden the old ways of her people in a Christianized religion. In a way she hides herself, she represents a "force of denial -- denial of primal memory" (Dash 37). He seeks to learn more to find himself. The two are filmed from the side and hold a dominant space at each side of the frame. Between them in the background are Eli and his

cousin practicing West African hand signals. The camera moves into the two men for a moment, centralizing their activities. Viola and Sneed are no longer in the frame. The camera moves back out to the original framing. This moment of cinematic narration, using deep focus and symmetrical frame composition, indicates Sneed's impending transformation because of his interest in the old ways and need for ancestral connection.

Uses of deep focus and wide angle composition are the predominant devices to signify communal, social, family space. The most predominant use of this mise-en-scene is at the beach picnic site where the family has gathered. The activity and arrangement of characters in relation to each other and to the land is centralized. This opposes dominant cinema's focus on the psychological, emotive individualism of characters which is seen in closeup framing, shot-reverse-shot editing and other hierarchal discursive practices.

The emphasis is on shared space...in which no one becomes the backdrop to anyone else's drama...rather than dominated space (foregrounded hero in sharp focus, others in background blur); on social space rather than idealized space (as in westerns); on delineated space that encourages a contiguous-reality reading rather than on masked space in which, through close-ups and framing, the spectator is encouraged to believe that conflicts are solely psychological not, say systemic (Dash xiii).

Using these techniques for specific intentions illustrates the political resistance of the film. This is also seen in Dash's other film work. "By the time Illusions

was screened, certain traits were recognizable Dash signatures," writes Cade-Bambara (Dash, The Making of... xiv). These traits were "virtuoso camera work -- most especially in Four Women; communal rather than dominated space -- most discernible in Illusions; experimental narrative; [and] the privileging of black women characters and their perspectives" (xiv). This acknowledges Dash's authorial presence, even though her camera operators may be different for each film. She is ultimately responsible for communicating how shots are to be composed.

Moreover, the film sequencing in Daughters of the Dust is not linear. It is cyclical, where several culminations or climaxes are presented within its 24-hour time period. Dash comments that in constructing the narrative in the manner of the African griot, "the story would just kind of unravel....through a series of vignettes...the story would just come out and come in and go out and come in (32). Susan Winnett argues that texts which depend on cause-and-effect sequencing of events, initiated by a central [hero] character whose sole purpose is to strive to conquer the various conflicts that get in the way of [his] resolution/objective are structured and read as masculine. Texts can be understood as feminist if they resist this model of canonical story structure. These feminist texts would include a series of climaxes and resolutions which fold back into themselves. The text would not work toward a closed ending but would allow for the story to continue beyond its cinematic life. And many characters would work

within the narrative structure, representing webbed accounts of the story material. This circularity also relates the temporal structuring of the text, which I will discuss in the next section. Time moves forward but does so only by turning back upon itself.

One more sequence illustrates the presence of multiple perspectives within the Peasant last-supper storyline. It culminates in the coming of the Unborn Child (Elegba, meaning the one we appeal to overcome indecision) to Eula and Eli. It also consummates their spiritual transformation and visitation of ancestral memory.

The Unborn child narrates, "I remember the long walk to the graveyard...to the house I would be born in...to the picnic site...I remember and I recall." She has led Eli to the ancestral grave site. In the meantime Viola recollects to Mr. Sneed about naming children, "It's fifty years since slavery...but here we still give our children names like My Own (Myown), I Own Her (Iona), You Need Her (Unita), I Adore Her (Iadora)..." Viola evokes the spirit of the ancestors and we return in slow speed to Eli in the graveyard. Her voice off screen continues, "Fantee, Cudah, Ocra, Yono, Cish, Alexmine, Jackemine, Jaspermine....Elegba." Eula watches Eli in front of his mother's grave. Drawing from this passage in Dash's script, we see the richness of this sequence.

Kneeling in front of his mother's grave,
Eli's head is turned to the left in frozen
reverence of the spirit that has embraced his
body. As a rider would take and mount a wild
horse, the spirit takes Eli and at the same

time...As the Unborn Child nears Eula, the spirit enters the billowing folds of Eula's voluminous skirt and fades back into her mother. Eula throws her head back and unleashes a verbal "ululation" (a call done with the tongue) that stirs the souls and stills the waters of Ibo Landing (Dash 139).

Portrayed on screen, this scene moves into the ancestral representation mode -- music up full, working toward a climatic crescendo, chanting, yelling, slow film speed, a cut to the African totem slave ship masthead and then to the child running to Eula and through dissolve becoming a part of her. It is as if time stands still in the diegesis to witness the union of the ancestors with the living family. The music softens, and we return to the picnic site where Daddy Mac is offering the food blessing. Nana remembers the old souls on the plantation and the way of the griot in recollecting the family history. Cutting back to Eula and Eli, we hear the Ibo myth/story through Eula. Music comes under, the slave ship figure appears, film speed slows down, and Eula holds her belly as the story is told. Eli has come from the graveyard and walks out on the water toward the floating figurehead as if to baptize it. Eula recalls,

When those Ibo got through sizing up the place real good and seeing what was to come, my grandmother say they turned, all of them, and walked back in the water...But chains didn't stop those Ibo. They just kept walking, like the water was solid ground...they was going home.

Eli comes from the water after the vision "sought and claimed him. Under the whip and guidance of his ancestral spirit rider, Eli has witnessed and performed things that he could not have done 'unridden'" (Dash 142). He kneels

before Eula and holds her belly. Both he and Eula know that the Unborn Child is his. Movement into this seemingly "unreal" spatial and temporal mode create ancestral narration, where we travel through time, fantastical events occur and the old spirit souls "feel" as if they are present. Dash creates this shift in spectating consciousness solely through cinematic devices -- auditory and visual channels which manipulate real time and space.

The Politics of Cinematic Narration: Speaking and Reading Between the Frames

Cinematic narration can also be ideologically commentative and question dominant ways of representation. In this instance, narration further explores the placement of women and spirituality at the center of the film. Black women's faces are framed close up. Long framed shots which echo landscape paintings, reveal their bodies in the crooks of tree branches on a hot afternoon. Their bodies become spectacles of beauty. Some of Dash's filmic signatures are seen in these examples of representation: the "privileging of black women characters and their perspectives; an attention to the glamour (in the ancient sense of the word) and sheer gorgeousness of black women" (Dash xiv). Film audiences have not been witness to narratorial styles which center the beauty of black women. As Toni Cade-Bambara has observed, "what draws women in particular to the lengthy movie theatre lines again and again is the respectful attention Dash gives to our iconography -- hair, clothes,

jewelry, skin tones, body language" (Dash xv).

Gloria Gibson-Hudson suggests that black women's films voice a black feminist cultural ideology. Cade-Bambara echoes this, writing that "by centralizing the voice, experience, and culture of women, most particularly, it fulfills the promise of Afrafemcentrists who choose film as their instrument for self expression" (122). Gibson-Hudson writes that these works "drawn from the diverse experiences of black women's lives, promote exploration of self, attack racial polarity, instill racial and female pride, and encourage individual and collective activism" ("Aspect of Black Feminist" 365). Films by black women communicate African American female socio-cultural history, identity, issues, metamorphic transformation, and consciousness raising through character and cinematic narration. Gibson-Hudson adds that as the "narratives progress, the filmmakers underscore the psychological maturation and self-awareness the characters undergo as their personal and/or cultural consciousness is transformed" ("Aspects of Black Feminist" 367). And as character narrators are understood to "tell" these contextual and thematic elements, it is the hope that "audiences will understand how the characters' maturation and subsequent empowerment on the screen can function to strengthen their own personal knowledge and consciousness" ("Aspects of Black Feminist" 367). She writes that:

...as the film characters confront their problems, they, in essence, help eradicate prescribed images of self and they forge their own unique self-definition. Thus these films dramatize the resilience of black women

who seek creative solutions as they confront and overcome personal and historical tensions (376).

The variety of signification techniques used in structuring and recounting narrative is partially understood by exploring character narration and cinematic narration. These modes of voice also illustrate how narrative promotes a gender and cultural consciousness that eventually influences audience reception. The narratorial address in Daughters of the Dust connects those who see glimpses of their own personal and cultural memories and realities. It also promotes exploration of the self and the legacy of personal and communal identity through shared stories which are conscious of African and African American tradition.

The narratological category of voice also works on another level besides character and cinematic narration. Voicing or creating the feminist film narrative itself is an act of "subversive" narration. Julie Dash is part of the conceptual voice/narrator in this sense. Susan Lanser suggests that the "narrative act itself becomes the source of possibility" (357). Women's films can be understood as voices of self identification and spiritual metamorphosis. As Gibson-Hudson suggests "black women artists frequently infuse their work with didactic messages exposing racial and sexual inequities by pointing to aspects of their lives that are lost in the stereotypes and narrow role allotted them in the mass media" (366). The voicing is in the use of cinema itself as the medium to challenge historical images and create personal, cultural and political realities for women

to participate in. This is reflexively textualized by Mignon Dupree the Hollywood producer in Illusions, who wants to tell important stories about people outside of the dominant Anglo culture. Filmmaking is a way to recover personal and communal memory that an oppressive society has subjugated. Julie Dash writes that

The stories from my own family sparked the idea of Daughters and formed the basis for some of the characters. But when I probed my relatives for information about the family history in South Carolina, or about our migration north to New York, they were often reluctant to discuss it. When things got too personal, too close to memories they didn't want to reveal, they would close up, push me away, tell me to go ask someone else. I knew then that the images I wanted to show, the story I wanted to tell, had to touch an audience the way it touched my family. I had to take them back, take them inside their family memories, inside our collective memories (Dash 5).

Although the power of this remembering is of vital importance to black women and Julie Dash primarily addresses this audience, it does not explain why other people may be attracted to and affected by her films. If Dash's films incorporate a gendered address, which address the different historical conditions of being a woman in a patriarchal society, then the film speaks on some level to all women [and men]. Julie Dash illuminates the lives of black women for black women, but other women have the potential of seeing their stories in these texts. Men are also given the opportunity to see the real stories of women that have been heretofore invisible. Daughters of the Dust is about family and personal perseverance, and we see women's central role

in the tradition of creation and weaving family webs.

This is a metatextual narration which I identify as conceptual/collaborative narration. Conceptual collaborative narration recognizes in part the authoring and contextual agent(s) of the text. In the field of narratology, Seymour Chatman recognizes the concept of the implied author as "an agent who stands between the real author and the narrator" (Stam et al. 101). The implied author is the "inventor" of the story and discourse for a particular text. Burgoyne notes that Wayne Booth defines the implied author as "the persons, or implicit image of an author in the text, standing behind the scenes and responsible for its design, its values and its cultural norms" (Stam et al. 101). In Daughters of the Dust, it is this narrative agent which grounds the text in a socio-historical context emanating from a particular cultural milieu. But Burgoyne also notes that the implied author should not suggest the real author (Julie Dash) because "the implied author varies with each text produced by the real author" (Stam et al. 101). This is problematic when considering the body of cinematic work by Julie Dash. Her films can be appraised in totality, especially considering the films' representation of black women, centrality of black women's voices, and the use of communal space in mise-en-scene. The comments that I presented earlier by Gibson-Hudson wholly recognize a real author as part of the construction of a film text. The authorial agent is that which produces a black feminist aesthetic and ideology.

Conceptual narration takes into account the real author, her crew, and production context in development of the text, its presentation to audiences, and the potential readings of that text.

For example, Daughters of the Dust is infused with historical accuracy of Gullah tradition, folkways, language and mannerisms or movement. Because film is a collaborative medium, discussion of one author as the overriding influence proves problematic. But a conceptual authorial narrator takes into account various production contributions -- lighting, camera work, music composition -- as well as those elements manifested from careful and accurate research -- costumes, language, and folkways. This brings the narratological element of context and who conceives (births) the narrative into consideration. Busia writes that "storytelling...must be undertaken within a cultural context, a context that includes, as indexes in the composition...aspects such as dress, food, dance, and formal and informal ritual, in addition to words themselves" (200).

16

At the level of context the cinematic text can also illustrate its feminist perspective, one committed to correcting the histories of a mainstream, dominant culture. Gibson-Hudson writes that one characteristic of black women's films is "the eradication of historical illusion and the presentation of authenticity regarding the historical development of African Americans becomes a dominant undergirding structure of African American women's film"

("African American Literary Criticism" 49). The world the characters inhabit must challenge Eurocentric methods, traditions and accuracy of historical recollection and record. Daughters of the Dust carries the concept of historical memory to the global context of diaspora cultures and cinematic representation. Dash is using history to construct a historical-mythology of black women.

At the level of conceptual narration, Dash worked with nationally known African-American artists to create a film with a rich African base. Dash blends elements of various African cultures in her portrayal of African American-ness. "We came from an Afrocentric approach to everything: from the set design, the costumes, from the hair to the way the makeup was put on...they put liner on the inside of their eye -- that comes from wearing khol in the desert regions of Africa" (Davis 116). Through the motor habits of the characters, employment of West African hand signals, food ways, folktales and costuming, Dash and the crew of Daughters of the Dust resurrect historical practices for audiences. Through the narrative, audiences glimpse layers of contextual codes that may influence their reception, understanding and engagement with the text.

Another contextual practice that adds to the understanding of Daughters of the Dust in developing an Africentric narration is the character's names. According to Webb,

...most characters in American narrative film are grounded in parameters dictated by the archetypical Greek god and goddesses of

classical western literature. The crucial underlying references for the Peazant family...are the deities of classical West African cosmologies ("The Story" 3).

Nana Peazant "represents a traditional African based socio-cultural belief system that must come to grips with a westernized belief system in the New World" ("The Story" 3). She is named for Obatala, a Yoruban diety of the sky. The younger Peazants who are leaving home are the daughters of Oshun, a Yoruban goddess who leaves home to seek her fortune in the city. Eula continues the Peazant family on the island. She is named for the West African diety Oya Yansa, the spirit of the winds of change. And her husband Eli represents the Yoruba diety Ogun. The Unborn Child "is the storm raging in Eula's womb. She occupies the space in the world of the sacred and the secular (Webb 3). Representing the double consciousness that W. E. B. DuBois wrote about, the Unborn Child, according to Webb "has one foot in this world and one foot in another. She is Eshu Elegba, trickster, linguist, Yoruba god, guardian of the crossroads" (3). Yellow Mary, named after the Yoruba goddess Yemonja is the "Mother of the Sea, the Mother of Dreams, the Mother of Secrets and often referred to as the Veiled Isis" as she returns from the mainland, a woman representing the loss of sense of self during slavery and reconstruction. The last name of the family -- Peazant -- is closely related to the word peasant, which can mean someone who works the land. This is not, however, an African word. Dash said she used this name because she had frequently heard it in family

stories and memory tales told by her father (Dash 34). Character naming indicates a culturally conscious context within the film's narration.

Temporality in Daughters of the Dust: African, Ancestral and "Limbo" Time ¹⁷

Taking cues from an Afrocentric and feminist belief system, Dash constructs a meandering temporal composition. The primary story line of the farewell picnic allows for many digressions, to the past, to individual character's memories, and to personal mental reflections. Dash's text does not normalize dominant discourses on and constructions of time, rather the film shows traces of subverting Western constructs of time. Instead time is communicated as experiential ancestral time reflected by the spiritually grounded Peazants and an "in-between" or "limbo" time as experienced by diaspora cultures. Greg Tate writes that

...slavery...transformed African people into products, enforcing a cultural amnesia that scraped away details without obliterating the core. We remain in a middle passage, living out an identity that is neither African nor American, though we crave for both shores to claim us (Dash 71).

Time itself is marked by conflict and resolution. It is a cultural marker, a contest between the past, the now, and the next moment. Often there is a lack of unity because of this, a forgetting of the past and how it leads up to our present. There is also a focus on the future which perpetuates a forgetfulness or mindlessness in the present. Tarthang Tulku writes that

Although science now deals in terms of sequences of events -- typical temporal series -- science is not capable of investigating this sequential nature of time itself...Whether or not an external physical change is observed to follow a given starting state, there is always a 'next moment' for any starting state...the *observing process itself* is predicated on this fact about time (119).

Our Western scientific, logic-based knowledge orients itself in an action-event based understanding of time. Tulku adds that "the availability of 'next moments' is so fundamental as to be unquestioned" (119). Caught in our concepts of sequential temporal sequences, Tulku suggests that

...the ability to predict that a certain type of event *will* follow is the *same* as explaining *why* time changes and a next moment occurs. But there is a difference between such predictive ability and a fundamental explanation. The difference is too subtle to matter *within* our ordinary framework. But if we become exposed to other types of 'time' and other ways of being, this difference between prediction and explanation is sufficient to motivate more curiosity about why our particular time is the way it is (119).

Time for traditionally rural-agrarian based cultures recognizes repetition, ritual, sequence, and cyclicity.¹⁸ This is also characteristic of women's traditional domestic work and child rearing. It also suggests persistence of traditions and practices which are as much a part of the present as the past. When the ancestors are called upon by Nana Peasant to guide the family over to the mainland safely she sees no temporal borders. She reaches across time saying "we carrying these memories inside of we." The hoop of her family, her people, will remain unbroken as she

evokes the consciousness of timelessness. The temporality of the mainland is divisive and forward looking, providing little space for cultural continuity. African time is related as cyclical time, where myths, proverbs, belief systems, and face to face conversation offers spaces for continuity of culture. It is this ancestral time that the migrating Peazants will have to call on in times of cultural domination and personal alienation.

Daughters of the Dust is linear only in the sense that we have a beginning and an ending to the film. But the beginning of the film is also its ending. The film begins with the boat's passage to Ibo Landing, and it ends with the boat leaving Ibo Landing to cross over the mainland. The sequential arrangement is cyclical. We begin at sunrise and end at sunrise. This is also indicated by Bilal's prayer practice which takes place every morning -- at each sunrise. He frames the cyclicity of the film's ordering.

The storytelling method of the Griot -- in and out from a storyline strand -- is related through episodic vignettes which unravel as the film progresses. The sequences are linked as if by a Peazant family web. The sequences are embedded narratives in the form of flashbacks and co-storylines within a larger narrating instance. Cinematic narration provides linkage for these series of embedded stories. In the previous section on narratorial voice, I provided examples of some of the "present" time embedded narratives. These take place during a 24-hour period. But the past is also recounted in that one-day narrative story

space to reinforce the importance of history as a sense of knowing one's present condition (story).

In Daughters of the Dust there are six flashbacks which relate individual memories of characters -- one is Eula's, one is the Unborn Child's, two are distinctly from Nana's memories, and two flashback sequences are not clearly "attached" to a character but are related by an omniscient narratorial memory. As suggested by Teshome Gabriel, flashbacks are used for "dynamic and developmental references to the past, instead of stagnant temporal reference points" ("Toward a Critical Theory" 40). They serve as reflexive helical devices to link past knowledge with the present.

The opening of the film is a flashback of Nana's hands holding the sea island soil. It is not clearly indicated as a flashback in the film text, but is noted as such in the script. The scene is in a slow film speed, which we later learn is the metadiegetic indicator of a tense or narratorial shift. This initial scene later become obvious as a flashback with the image is revisited in the final flashback of the film after Eula's epiphanous validation monologue. She says, "We're the daughters of those old dusty things Nana carries in her tin can." Both flashbacks are of the fields that a young Nana and her husband Shad cultivate. In the second one, Shad plants seeds in a traditional African way, using heel and toe. This flashback is the first one to have dialogue by its characters. "Shad, how can we plant in this dust?" "We plant each year and

every year, or we're finished." The entire family are children of this dust. A close up on Nana's hands reveals the wind blowing the dirt away. The circle has come back around, like the life circle of the Peazants.

The second flashback is a memory of Nana's as she weaves a basket of Sea Island grass with her Indigo-dyed hands. Her off camera voice says "Our hands, scarred blue with the poisonous indigo dye that built up all those plantations from swampland." As her voice recollects, we visually are taken to that time. A large vat of indigo dye with stained blue hands working the cloth appear. Dash used the indigo dye as atypical scars of slavery. Dash says that she knows the indigo dye would probably not remain on the hands of the old folks who had worked in the processing areas. But she wanted to use "this as a symbol of slavery, to create a new kind of icon around slavery rather than the traditional showing of the whip marks or the chains...I wanted to show it in a new way (31) which has not become a part of popular culture which we are accustomed to and calloused about seeing. Again we see an example of Dash's poeticization of history in the decision to show dyed hands rather than whip scarred backs. The symbolic historical representation is for thematic purposes, to illustrate the trade that made plantation owners wealthy off of forced black labor. Are audiences aware of this historical license? The images, although powerful, remain etched in our minds as new memories of a truth not told in mainstream history books. Dash's film work illustrates that history is

subjective.

This flashback is an example of what Lezlie Hart-Stivale calls "instances of reflection" (359). The sequence remains grounded in the present (first narrative) with Nana's voice over, but visually reflects to the past in a related narrative. The emphasis is not necessarily on "events" as both Genette and Rimmon-Kenan insist are requisite in flashback sequences. These scenes are not "reinforced by 'occurrences'" (Hart-Stivale 360). These "passive" story materials do not fit into the linear, action-resolution model but rather fold back into themselves as acts of recollection. Perhaps because traditional narratologists focused on a limited range of narratives, then their theories are not adequate for explaining all narratives and must be expanded. The narrative seems to move into itself in a circular manner before it moves "on."

The third flashback is similar. This flashback is an "instance of reflection" by Eula. As she watches and listens to Yellow Mary and Trula talk, Eula recalls a happier time for her and Eli before her pregnancy and the imminent move North. Music, drums, and laughter accompany a slow speed film style to metadiegetically indicate a tense shift. We are taken to the beach in a slight sepia grained scene where Eli chases Eula toward the water. It is captured in an expansive wide shot. This reinforces their freedom to run over the sand dunes like children. There is no one else in sight, as if the two have the world to themselves.

The fourth flashback is a reflection of the Unborn

Child's. This is the longest flashback sequence, privileging the recollection of the Unborn Child whose narrative frames the entire film. She says "In this quiet place, years ago, my family knelt down and caught a glimpse of the eternal." Smoke fills the screen as a transition device from the ancestral graveyard to the indigo plantation, and music and sound effects come up. The speed in the flashback varies from slow motion to regular 24 frames per second speed. ¹⁹ "We left our markers in the soil...in memory of the families who once lived here...we were the children of those who chose to survive...years later my ma told me she knew I was sent forward by the old souls." This voice over continues throughout the entire visualization of the past. We see the blue-stained paddles stirring the fermenting indigo solution. For a moment, the Unborn Child enters the screen dressed in her "fancy Sunday" white dress from the Peazant picnic to peer into the vat and look at the camera. Bare hands scrape the indigo paste into block forms to make cubes. The cubes are dried in the sun. Shad Peazant appears and sing-counts the blocks in African as a young boy watches and learns. When we return back to the beach scene, the Unborn Child joins the children who are looking at the wish book. With a blue-stained finger, she points to a picture of a toy. "I was travelling on a spiritual mission, but sometimes I would get distracted," she voices. This instance of reflection is not from the child's actual memory as a physical human being. It is from her soul's travel through the planes of the ancestors, where

she appears to touch all of those who came before her. Small-McCarthy notes that "the Yoruban world view...holds that 'everything is mediated between three realms: the living, the ancestors, and the unborn'" (296).

The fifth instance of reflection is again from Nana's perspective. As Daddy Mac assumes the role of the Griot at the family picnic, telling the group about the long line of Peazants, Nana drifts away to the past and thinks "out loud" as her memory voice fades up when Daddy Mac's speaking voice fades lower. There is a shot of the full moon as a metatextual transition and Nana remembers "I recollect how we lived in the time before freedom came, in the old days." Visually the slave quarters are presented with a square dance taking place. Then we then see a line of old slaves facing the setting sun. They are acting as family griots. As Nana remembers the griot from her slave days, she mirrors what Daddy Mac is doing with the family circle in present time. The time frame neither shifts wholly to the past nor exists in the present. Time is linked from then to now. Nana's memory works across and through what is a self-constructed linearity. When we return back to the picnic area visually, Daddy Mac holds a tortoise shell decorated with a painted shape. There are two lines, one runs horizontally and one vertically. A small circle encloses the center intersecting point. Four smaller circles are attached at the ends of each line point, and a larger circle encompasses the whole. Time runs in many dimensions and directions. As I noted in chapter two, Dorothy Pennington

asks us to consider time as four-dimensional, not unilinear, like the two lines that connect to the four small circles on the tortoise shell. "Everyone lives along his or her own subjective time dimension (individual growth) which interacts with and intersects the three other dimensions of past, present and future" (127).

Time relationships are often group-directed for Africans, according to Pennington. Group relations can develop from one's religious ontology and range from God (Supreme Being) to spirits, to humans, to animals, plants and inanimate objects (Pennington 127). Time is inseparable from the life force, which moves in irregular ways and manners. According to Pennington, time can be used to establish

...a complexity of balanced relationships;
 ...a relationship with the Supreme Being;...a
 relationship of continuity between the past
 and present generations;...a relationship
 with nature and the forces of one's
 environment (nature);... and to create group
 harmony and participation among the living
 (137).

This is the notion I refer to as ancestral time. Ancestors can be humans or otherwise, and when in the presence of ancestral communion, time representations in Daughters of the Dust shift. Ancestral time and relations to spirituality are seen in examples which illustrate the narrative temporal category of duration.

Freeze frames are used twice in the film. One is of Myown and Iona "striking a pose" in imitation of Trula and Yellow Mary, the modern women. After the film freezes, it

fades to white and fades up on Eli in a pose doing an African hand signal. The old and the new merge together in this photographic technique. These photographs, along with all the ones Mr. Sneed will capture, are holders of memories for the Peazants. One of Dash's early influences for the film idea was exposure to a series of old photographs of black women at the turn of the century. In these instances of narrative slow-down, where discourse time is greater than story time, Dash incorporates the photograph theme to further underscore the memory theme.

There is also pronounced use of slow motion film speeds. This is the metadiegetic indicator of memory and ancestral communion. At first this appears to be slow-down which, according to Mieke Bal, "can be defined as the discourse swelling the time of an event that occupies a considerably shorter time in the story" (Stam et al. 121). When this slow motion appears, discourse time is greater than story time, but there are particular sequences of slow down which appear in moments of narrative summary. Editing and film speed work together. The narratological category of summary identifies when a long stretch of story-time or material is "condensed, or abridged, in a brief passage of discourse" (Stam et al. 120). I will use the term "interludes" to identify the use of slow motion (or fast motion) within summary. This recognizes two temporal elements of narrative working in unison. These are montages of family activity which remain in that ancestral mode of temporal communication, usually accompanied by music, slow

motion, or voice over. The first interlude is a scene on the beach with Eula, Trula and Yellow Mary. Slow motion and real time film speed portray the three woman meandering about the beach, sitting on driftwood, finding a sea drenched parasol and lying under it wrapped up in each other's comfortable embraces.

The second interlude is a series of shots which include the Peazants at the picnic site in the eye of a storm. Eli is teaching a teenage boy his "secret society" hand signals, Viola is teaching the young women etiquette, some Peasant men play an African board game and the Newlywed woman is getting her hair braided. The interlude ends with Eli meeting his cousin on a forest path. The amount of real story time this interlude covers is unknown and irrelevant because there is no context for time needed to understand the story material. Memories are portrayed as a series of webbed vignettes, underscored with music. They communicate passage of custom and ancestral practices. This is the "teaching" interlude.

The eating of the food illustrates another interlude which is portrayed in regular film speed. Many cinematic dinners are sat down to but never eaten in discourse time. But this narrative summary focuses (through close ups) on the food ways of the Peazants as we see oysters, steamed crab, rice, corn on the cob, vegetables, gumbo, fruits, and corn bread. This interlude expresses the agrarian experience of black Americans on the Sea Islands. Everything that we see comes from this locale -- the sea and

the land. The sense of community is communicated as they are photographed socializing and eating through wide angle shots. Through editing, the story time moves, but there is focused discursive attention to food ways, group preparation and eating.

One interlude is faster paced, primarily because it represents the kinetics of children. The music is quickly paced as we see shots of Mr. Sneed arranging the teenage Peazants for their group photo. This interlude includes photographing the younger children, Yellow Mary with the kids and Eula with the children listening to her belly.

The final temporal interlude takes place when Nana is intently constructing the family "hand." An anguished "field cry" is emitted on the sound track as Nana rises from her chair and tries to run away from the beach picnic site. The Peazant men come running and Yellow Mary takes Nana into her arms as the family gathers around. It is at this point that Yellow Mary decides to stay at Ibo landing. Trula's reaction to run away from the family gathering also supports the knowledge of Yellow Mary's decision. It is focalized through a reaction shot of Trula.

These temporal interludes illustrate the focus of imagery and music guiding the film as much as story (narrated-spoken) material. Time is portrayed as meditative, slow and rhythmic. This is the memory time of both our personal recollections and of ancestral knowledge. Feminist texts often look back into history or memory to re-vision the past and create new stories for the cinema canon.

For example in Illusions, Dash looks back at a fictional Hollywood that repressed black female characters and actresses. Mignon's revelation comes when she realizes her blackness in this oppressive structure. She vows to change the "illusions" of the past and future. Mignon speaks reflexively as Dash, who is the constructive/collaborative narrator of these transformational films.

As the narrative in Daughters of the Dust folds back into itself, it resists moving somewhere. During these interludes there appears to be nowhere to go, no sense of linearity in a plot-driven sense. Eula's pregnancy is the physical manifestation of this inwardness. The life space is within (the body, the narrative) not necessarily looking outward -- to an end resolution. Winnett's call for female models of narrative are answered in part by this film's temporal arrangement and narrative voice.

The Senegalese griot D'Jimo Kouyate says that "what the griot gave to African society in oral history, cultural information and ancestral wisdom and knowledge is the key with which all people of African descent can progress and maintain a high level of understanding of their true heritage" (Goss and Barnes 179). Dash employs a feminist aesthetic which is based in an historical African and African-American women's context and tradition. Julie Dash closes her 1983 film Illusions with the main character Mignon Dupree saying:

We would meet again, Ester Jeeter and I, for it was she who helped me see beyond the shadows dancing on a white wall...to define

what I had already come to know, and to take action without fearing...Yes! I wanted to use the power of the motion picture, for there are many stories to be told and many battles to begin (Klotman 212).

Dash uses what would be considered a racist term -- white wall -- in the same sense that black comedy might be called racist. Haven't movie screens been known as the "silver screen." The use of this name might be intentional as she symbolically indicates that the "white screen" has historically been a projection of the Anglo perspective. There appears no way out of racist language as long as someone wants to cite "difference" in that very language. Language itself, and cinema as language, both need to keep open their metacritical opportunities. The chapter on Trinh Minh-ha illustrates how she considers interactivity between the film director and the audience as both creators of meaning, subjectivity, and representation.

Dash is the modern day griot and Daughters of the Dust one of her eloquent stories. Although this chapter focuses primarily on Daughters of the Dust, a close textual reading of Illusions, Praise House and/or Four Women from a feminist narratological perspective also illustrates the importance of the developing area of cinematic criticism and theory. This analysis illustrates how a combination of narrative studies and feminist scholarship adds to our understanding of cinematic narration, of narrative meaning, and ultimately of how these texts are read by viewers and folded into their repertoire of cultural narratives to be passed on again and

again.

Notes

1. The use of the "he" pronoun in Gullah language and culture refers to both he and she. The griot could be female or male, but was always an elder in the clan, tribe or community. I have written the words phonetically as in "hissself" so the reader gets an understanding of how Nana Peazant pronounces them in Gullah dialect in the film. This language itself would be an interesting subject for feminist narratologists especially because of its use of traditional masculine pronouns.
2. See also Dash pg. xvi and Cade-Bambara pg. 142 for the "partial roll call" of black women filmmakers.
3. All biographical information comes from Women Make Movies Inc., New York, NY, who provided me with press file information on Dash in October 1995; Screenplays of the African American Experience Ed. Phyllis Klotman (1991): pgs. 191-192; and Daughters of the Dust: The Making of an African American Women's Film by Julie Dash with bell hooks and Toni Cade Bambara (1992): pgs. 1-68.
4. For more information contact Floyd Webb, Studio Bank, itutu@suba.com who designed and executed the web page or see <http://www.pacificnet....geechegirl/TheFilm.html> or email: Geechee Girl.
5. Information taken from notes on Illusions in filmography and biography file provided by Women Make Movies, NY.
6. Information comes from correspondence with Dr. Phyllis Klotman, Indiana University, via electronic mail letter dated 9/2/96.
7. Arthur Jafa and Haile Gerima also talked about jazz aesthetics and jazz editing in a June 1995 presentation on Black filmmaking at the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis, MN. This conversation/ presentation is available on tape at the Art Center library. According to this conversation Jazz aesthetics are a component or technique of what can be considered the black film aesthetic.
8. Small-McCarthy focuses solely on literary jazz aesthetics in the novels of Toni Morrison. This model also works when considering the various techniques of black film aesthetics.
9. See "The Story" notes on web site <http://pacificnet....geechegirl/The Film.html>.
10. Although Yellow Mary's dialogue only reveals that she was a wet nurse on the mainland, Dash's comments also notes that Yellow Mary was a prostitute. "In my research I found that most prostitutes of that time were involved with other

women," writes Dash referring to Trula and Yellow Mary's friendship-relationship (Dash 66).

11. Information take from correspondence via electronic mail from Julie Dash to author on August 14, 1996. The next two quotations also come from this source.

12. See Stam et al. for Burgoyne's thorough discussion on narratology.

13. Dash, and Goss and Barnes, suggest that the story of the Ibo is told several ways. It is said that one of the last slave ships to come to America from Africa had members of the Ibo (tribe) on it. After the torturous journey, the Ibo came off the slave ship and looked around. It is said they then turned back to face Africa and walked on the water all the way home because they didn't want to be slaves. It is also said they flew back to Africa. In actual historical records that Dash located in researching Daughters of the Dust, She found that the real story is that the Ibo walked back into the water, men, women and children, and drowned themselves rather than be forced into slavery (Dash 29-30). Many of the shipmates who kept diaries spoke of others who had nervous breakdowns watching the Ibos holding themselves under the water until they drowned. According to Dash, "myth is very important in the struggle to maintain a sense of self and to move forward into the future" (29-30). Goss and Barnes note that while walking back into the water, The Ibo sang in African a song which is sung today in English (139-140):

"The Ibo Landing Song"

*Oh Freedom, oh freedom, oh freedom over me
And before I'd be a slave I'll be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.*

*No more crying, no more crying, no more crying will there be
And before I'd be a slave I'll be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.
no more groaning, no more dying will there be
and before I'd be a slave I'll be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.
Oh freedom, oh freedom, oh freedom over me
And before I'd be a slave I'll be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.*

14. Information and quotation taken from correspondence with Julie Dash via electronic mail letter dated August 14, 1996.

15. The copy of this article that I use for this chapter is taken from the General Periodicals computer database. Pagination reflects that source, not necessarily the original source from African American Review (Spring 1995) 29.1: 5-16.

16. Busia writes about Paule Marshall's Praisesong for a Widow, which Dash notes as an influential force for Daughters of the Dust. In this passage, Busia writes about the importance of the Ibo Landing slave landing story, a cultural myth-story, which Dash also uses in the film.

17. I borrow the term Limbo Time from an essay "Disruptions of Time: Narrative Legacies in Dash's Daughters of the Dust and Marshall's Praisesong for a Widow," presented at the 1993 American Studies Association conference in Boston, MA, by Sheila Smith McKoy.

18. This can also include indigenous cultures and some diasporic cultures. Linear time relates to cultures that are Westernized in the industrial and technological sense and cyclical time to those persons or cultures which are more closely linked to the land, seasonal changes, planting and harvesting, weather conditions, etc.

19. Standard sound film speed is 24 frames per second. Slow motion is created by slowing the film speed to less than the standard rate.

IMPLICATIONS OF A FEMINIST NARRATOLOGY:
TEMPORALITY, FOCALIZATION AND VOICE
IN THE FILMS OF JULIE DASH, MONA SMITH AND TRINH T. MINH-HA

Volume II

by

JENNIFER ALYCE MACHIORLATTI

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1996

MAJOR: COMMUNICATION
(Radio/Television/Film)

Approved by:

Julie Bryan 11/4/96
Co-Advisor Date

Don W. Spalding Nov. 4, 1996
Co-Advisor Date

Robert B. Berger 11/4/96

Robert Steele 11/4/96

Danmy B. B. B. 11/4/96

CHAPTER FIVE

DAKOTA MEANS ALLY: THE VIDEO EXPRESSIONS OF MONA SMITH

Native American Video Aesthetics:

Finding A Voice and Walking the Red Road

Native American author Janet Campbell Hale evokes the experience of Native women in her poem "Ancestresses."

*I am brown-skinned orphaned sister,
Child only of the never-known long dead,
Child only of they
Who walk with me in the cold damp
Beside the sea.
(See how the great dark mountains make us shelter)
Indian grandmothers of the long ago,
How much sweeter could the old days have been
Than these belonging to me now?*

*They cannot whisper lies
Whom I have called forth and cannot harm,
Can only say what I would have them say:
"Yes, Grandchild, you who are from us
Are of us too." Yes.
Hear the beat of the Indian drums.
See the eagle how it circles, circles.*

Contemporary Indian ancestresses are working in modern media like film, video, multi-media and eventually, according to Mona Smith, on Internet and World Wide Web interactive telecommunication lines.¹ They leave visual legacies for future generations which correct inaccurate historical images created by dominant culture. These ancestresses also create new visions by recording life stories of Native Americans. They use video and film to bond community and serve leadership roles in Indian activism. Campbell Hale's poem continues:

*When I myself
Return to earth and sky and sea
And no one lives who remembers me,
Then I will be at the side of she who imagines me there,*

*Her old Indian ancestress.
 I lived here once (she will have me say)
 And like yourself walked along these shores
 And breathed the salt-air
 And felt the wind on my face.
 Just like you, granddaughter's granddaughter.
 Through you we endure,
 We spirits of the long-dead
 Who cannot whisper lies,
 Who cannot turn away,
 Who can only love
 And say yes, it was as you say.
 Look to the great dark mountains,
 Blood of my blood.
 Hear the drums...drums...drums.
 See there the eagle how it glides.
 How it circles, circles.*

(Lerner 87)

Native North American film and video artists and educators are storytellers who use a medium that is relatively new to them. Native American film and video artists use this media of memory in a language (aesthetic) different from mainstream film form. Steven Leuthold writes that "their challenge includes the representation of Native thought and identities to several different audiences" (52). And he asks, "does becoming a successful media producer/director mean being absorbed into the mainstream and losing the very qualities that may have produced a 'Native way of seeing?'" (52).

The continuation of community is central to the 'Native way of seeing.' Jamie Sams writes that "the storytellers of all tribes and nations are the bridge to other times and ancient teachings" (223). The Storyteller (also called twisted hair in some nations)

...held a position in the Council of Elders.
 As a historian, the Storyteller was called
 upon to recall past events with total

accuracy so that the events could be used to pattern a present solution. The Twisted Hairs taught how to live life in a balanced manner... (Sams 225).

However, one of the problems of working in a linear medium, like video, and portraying a world view of non-linearity is one of the challenges in developing the notion of a Native aesthetic.² Moreover, historical accuracy seems naive if we consider performance and content embellishments that narrators add to their storytelling. Roger Buffalohead writes that "ultimately, how American society views our history and culture and contemporary life is less important than how we view it ourselves" ("Film and Its Effect on Native Communities"). Leuthold (1994) writes about Native American Production in Film and Video and the importance of specialized production/distribution facilities like Salish-Kootenai College in Montana, training and educational outlets as exemplified by the IAIA [Institute of American Indian Arts] in Santa Fe, and independent financial and archival support through the NAPBA [Native American Public Broadcasting Consortium]. These resources are necessary for Native self-expression through video and film.

Mona Smith also indicates there has to be a Native aesthetic because there is an entirely different world view for the Lakota, Crow, Ojibwe, Mohawk, Hopi, etc. This aesthetic is created when "we allow it and explore it - - these different ways of approaching the medium," says Smith. Yet there are also some similarities that connect the body of video work which override some of the

differences. As the poem above evokes, the Native world view is understood like the eagle's flight path, or the drum beat. It is circular spiral -- recognizing the inevitable cycle of birth-death-transformation and the sacred wheel of life.

Hopi filmmaker Victor Masayesva, Jr. is a pioneer in the critical discussions of a Native aesthetic. His video and film work also illustrates the practice of some of the techniques that might be included in this emerging and developing sense of visual and aural style. For example, Masayesva writes that

The technical conventions of filmmaking would shift, evidenced in how we use a 360 degree pan to tell a story rather than show facility in a physically complicated move; where we begin and end a sequence without drawing attention to complicated dolly track configurations, but showing why motion must follow a certain order; how we look at motion itself... (21)

Santa Clara Pueblo filmmaker Beverly Singer writes "the significance of being an indigenous filmmaker resides in our relation to our way of living...to the concepts of reciprocity, creativity, storytelling and clan based relations" (22). Masayesva adds that

...if we indigenous filmmakers were to showcase our true differences, we would infuse film with the same reverence we have for our oral and performing traditions. By expressing distinct tribal voices, we would be expounding the indigenous aesthetic (20).

In developing and redeveloping this indigenous aesthetic, Masayesva notes that "it is our oral tradition and 'Tikiveh,' which combines dance, song, ritual, ceremony and

worship" (21) that might be able to draw parallels between works by Native North Americans. In this tradition, stories do not seem to originate entirely from the intellect, but from emotion, intuition and experiential impressions. Emotion and intuition have been divorced from intellect in a rational-based world. These impressions are based on the artist's ties to ancestral knowledge and memory, which can be both empowering and destructive. These themes connect Native writers, directors and producers across tribal variation. Jamie Sams writes that "memory is a special part of our Native American Tradition. Since our histories are passed down orally, the remembering is an art" (224).

Contemporary stories also are influenced by a person's upbringing -- whether it be on a reservation which to some is considered ancestral homeland, or as an urban Indian who has typically lived marginalized within Euro-Anglo dominated surroundings. The reverence for traditional beliefs however, can still be passed down to children and community members, despite the region one comes from. Spirit lives in the heart, not the postal address.

Whatever perspective a Native American filmmaker operates from, storytelling continues to serve a communal function, and there is inevitably an element of "social accountability" in that production (Leuthold 41-57). Masayeva writes that "stories and Tikiveh always have a socially redeeming function. The stories inevitably conclude with 'yanhakam' or 'yantakat ovi,' meaning 'this is how' or 'this is why'" (21). A sense of family and

community are affirmed and respected through this storytelling manner. Sams echoes this, contending that

...the storytellers of Native America are the Guardians of our history and our Sacred Traditions...They ensure the future expansion our children will bring to the Earth by keeping our ancient knowledge alive (223).

Because Native American expression has been subjugated for several centuries, that expression is being re-learned by many indigenous persons. And in that process, the collective memory of many people is emerging to forge a new way of understanding the world. Poet/novelist Janet Campbell Hale writes that "stories...are an intuitive sort of thing...brewed in the unconscious -- fiction comes from the deeper, darker places in the writer's soul, the same places that dreams come from, and as in the making of dreams" (94). Mona Smith agrees that there may be Native aesthetic trends, but they are not yet fully realized. And it is also an aesthetic that is in continual development. It is revisited and relearned as part of the artist's process of expression. She says "it is out there to happen," although in its development there needs to be recognition of differences among Native Americans themselves -- tribal affiliation, region, location of living (urban/reservation), gender, and goals of the filmmaker in terms of audience. Because Smith was raised off of the reservation she can speak the "language" (world view) of whites. But she also cannot speak the Hopi "language" (world view) that Masayesva does because he was raised in the Hopi way. "I grew up with yesterday, today and

tomorrow. He didn't. So how does that translate to film?" asks Smith.

There are some Native American cinematic techniques that Smith jokes about. She asks, "Do the words web, journey, circle or road appear in the title? Is there flute music? Are there historical photos to start? Then it's a Native film. As Smith says, "We buy into our own stereotypes, too." This comments illustrates Smith's awareness of the construction of reality through narratorial recounting. Her video work also suggests more awareness of the fiction/truth constructing nature of video and film production. Julie Dash's work focuses on creating mythic memories within films which are based on historical themes and events. Smith has similar goals -- to combine elements of accuracy/truth (especially those issues about AIDS education and personal experiences) with her more "constructed" story elements.

According to Clint Wilson and Felix Gutierrez (1995), stereotyping has been used as a dramatic device. "It is a means of quickly bringing to the audience's collective consciousness a character's anticipated value system and/or behavioral expectations" (61). Stereotyping can be a device that is used without bigotry, but that is rare in mass entertainment. Stereotyping provides "shortcuts to character development and form a basis for mass entertainment and literary fare" (Wilson and Gutierrez 61). Typing characters is also dangerous when used by the dominant culture as a point of reference where minority

groups are always the negative aspect within that reference.

Considering this delicate balance of typing -- what explains an emerging Native aesthetic? William Wei writes about the process that minority (dominated) cultures move through when constructing a collective culture. Writing about Asian-generated media, Wei says the first stage is becoming conscious of, and refuting dominant stereotypes. "Challenging distorted images cleared away some of the psychological impediments to the development of an authentic Asian American identity" (64). The second phase of minority representation is reclaiming history and recovering the accurate history of oneself, community and people. The third phase is then to create a culture "to give form and substance to that identity" (64). Within this progression, with which oppressed groups reclaim their own cultural images, are two concerns, according to Wei; one is political and one is aesthetic. An aesthetic film form would be both political and cinematically [aesthetically] innovative.

This same aesthetic expression can be applied to Native North Americans as they assume more control in media production, develop educational programs for Indian students in video and film art, and locate unique aesthetic qualities and cinematic techniques to express themselves. Although it is important to point out that development of a "Native Aesthetic" is not linear, not evolutionary, and not finite. That is antithetical to Native thinking. It is a process of expression whereby different artists express different stories within the circle of storytelling. Leuthold writes

that "a group must control access to information for the purposes of controlling its identity" (55). Smith comments that

Amos Owen (Dakota spiritual leader who passed a few years ago...and is the voice of the elder in That Which is Between) used to say, 'We are all children, as long as we live, we are children.' So the process of Native aesthetic development relates to that to me...we are constantly going back and re-learning, unlearning, exploring.³

Several Indian filmmakers work solely in the first and second stages of Wei's model for construction of a collective culture. Smith recognizes filmmakers like Phil Lucas (Images of Indians, The Honor of All, Circle of Warriors, Voyage of Discovery, The Native Americans) and George Burdeau (The Real People, Pueblo Peoples: First Contact, Surviving Columbus) who work to educate mainstream audiences about Native American history. Their primary goals are to re-image Indians in popular culture. Smith says that she honors their work because something has to be done to educate the mass audience. In these productions, Smith says, "You have to forget a Native aesthetic except in small choices" because [Kevin] "Costner won't give you money and Ted Turner isn't going to put it on." Indian filmmakers are always in the process of translation, especially when their goal is to reach a large audience. Smith adds that "Phil says that we must speak in the vocabulary of our audience for them to understand."⁴ This first stage of developing a collective culture is an activist position. Stage one serves an educational function to facilitate

awareness of dominant culture's hegemonic popular representations. Stage one is also a method of healing. Correcting inaccurate dominant images is an important task of historical re-visioning because mainstream attitudes about Indigenous Americans have primarily been learned through the news media and Hollywood cinema. As early as 1894, Thomas Edison's kinetoscopes were showing such shorts as Sioux Ghost Dance and Moki Snake Dance (1901). These were some of the first films to portray Native North Americans as the "primitive", "savage" and "uncivilized" Other.

Hollywood has a rich legacy of portraying Native Americans in a degrading and absolutely inaccurate historical manner (Bataille & Silet, 1980; Friar, 1972; Hilger, 1986; and O'Connor 1976). These continuing mainstream media representations, along with the linguistic dehumanization of naming the original people who inhabited the Americas, put the power in the hands of the oppressor.

This redefinition began with the arrival of European conqueror Christopher Columbus and continues today with mainstream celebrations of the "discovery" of the New World. According to Haig Bosmajian, "Once the Indians were labeled 'Natives,' their domestication or extermination became, ostensibly, permissible" (66). Forced education, religion and adoption of the English language drove indigenous Americans even farther from their ancestral customs.

Native American students are still learning about themselves through stereotypical and inaccurate portrayals

in literature and history books as well. Indigenous students are forced to learn the history of their Eurocentric oppressors. "This practice of demanding that the oppressed honor and pay homage to the oppressor was itself part of the dehumanizing process," writes Bosmajian. Part of the re-claiming of media by First Nation people is to reclaim their original world view (voice) and ways of living (walking the Red Road). Recognizing inaccuracies is an initial step in reclaiming and renaming oneself. As Bosmajian indicates, "once one has been categorized through the language of oppression, one loses most of the power to determine one's future and control over one's identity" (88). By reclaiming their own images, Native American film and video producers, directors and performers are active on all three fronts. They correct historical images for themselves and for mainstream audiences, develop new texts with accurate and empowering images, and finally structure those texts in ways that contrast hegemonic mainstream storytelling.

The final stage of collective cultural development serves to politically retaliate against several centuries of cultural annihilation. A second reason for development of a Native aesthetic lies in the work of this entire dissertation -- to realize that there are more ways to present narrative than through the Western notions of space and time. Leuthold writes that

Creating indigenous media, then, isn't just a matter of overcoming technical and production difficulties; it's a matter of Natives

pursuing their own objectives and style...indigenous media is a movement towards independence, self-reliance, even sovereignty. The desire to reestablish or maintain a separate identity is strong for Native producers who consistently state the need to tell their own stories, in their own way, to their own communities (56-57).

Bosmajian concludes that "ultimately, self-realization requires the power to shape one's future, to control one's destiny, to choose from a variety of alternatives" in how to live out one's life, how to communicate that to others, and how to instill cultural memories that are redemptive and healing (88). Smith honors the work done before her by other Native filmmakers, regardless of the aesthetic choices they make and purposes of their works. Glimpses of the Native aesthetic indicate the usefulness of all of Wei's stages, although also indicate that the stages should be considered as non-hierarchical and non-evolutionary. "It is part of the circle of need. It is integral. It makes room for the rest of us who choose different ways." ⁵

Biographical Notes on Mona Smith:

Leadership Through the Video Voice

Mona Smith operates primarily in phase three of developing a collective culture -- working in the experimental narrative and non-fiction form to conceptualizing a Native aesthetic. She also addresses specialized (Native) audiences. To Smith, smaller audiences are important. She feels a sense of commitment in reaching her audiences with her work. Posted on her office door is her intention in video making: "To express the strength,

hope and imagination of Native people." This includes recognizing the importance of leadership in the Native community. Smith says that "having come to Indian country...the leadership and strength that's available in the Indian communities for the rest of the globe and for ourselves is such a miracle of the universe. The fact that any Indian people are alive is beyond me."

Although all the independent video work Mona Smith does is Native-focused, she understands mainstream Anglo culture because she was raised in that culture. Smith is a Siseton-Wahpeton Sioux, of the Dakota (Lakota) Nation. Originating from the North Eastern part of South Dakota, Mona's mother left her reservation when she was seventeen years old after getting a scholarship to a finishing school in Kentucky. Smith went to the Village Academy for Girls -- an all girls boarding school. After graduating from high school Smith enrolled in Webster College in St. Louis, primarily she says, because the teachers told the young women students which "liberal" schools to avoid, and Webster was one of them. She ended up taking a variety of courses and focused on women's studies because it did not require her to select one field of scholarship. This illustrates Smith's sense of nonconformity, which has stayed with her throughout her video career. Smith moved onto graduate school at Mankato State University and ended up teaching women's studies courses there. While at Mankato State, Smith was selected "Teacher-Mentor of the Year" for two consecutive years in the Women's Studies department. Also while in graduate

school, Smith attended a summer video production workshop. This workshop solidified her interests in video production. Smith supported her independent video production work with jobs in public relations and video production. It was here that she met Nan Tosky, who would become a mentor and collaborator on future projects including That Which Is Between (1989) which I analyze in depth in this chapter. Smith also composed a play, Stars in the Sky, for the White Earth Tribal Council and Minnesota American Indian AIDS Task Force.

Smith's recent professional work includes responsibilities with the National Indian AIDS Media Consortium in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she provided information, resources, and distribution services for national Native American media workers and organizations. Smith's video focus on gay Native Americans and AIDS in the Native community resulted from this liaison, although her video work was not in official affiliation with the National Media Consortium. She assumed responsibility outside of her professional work to produce these educational and activist videos.

Smith has formed a new company called "Allies," which is one translation of the name Dakota. She currently operates her production company out of the Native Arts Circle in Minneapolis on Franklin Road, in the Minneapolis Indian cultural community. Franklin Road was an important location in the founding of AIM (The American Indian Movement). The location of her office speaks to her

commitment to video activism and community leadership. Smith has several projects in the works as of late 1996. Allies just completed taping performance vignettes on anti-violence with a youth art workshop, and will be finishing production on a Native lullabies and stories audio tape for the gift market. Allies is also currently negotiating to do a 12-part cooking and culture series for National Native Entertainment television for a 1998 airing.

Mona Smith specializes in short videos, ranging from several minutes to thirty minutes in length. Descriptions of the videos to be used in this study will follow a brief videography overview. Smith's first video, Heartbeat, Drumbeat (1986), was produced for the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource center. This was followed by Her Giveaway: A Spiritual Journey With AIDS (1987, 21 minutes) which was screened at numerous national and international festivals including Women in the Director's Chair (1989), as well as being broadcast on KBDI-TV (Denver), KCET (Los Angeles), and South Dakota and Colorado Public Television affiliates. Her Giveaway received a first finalist in the Minnesota Shorts and Video Festival. Following this video, Smith wrote, produced and directed the video A New Direction in Indian Country (1988) for Sinte Gleska College in Rosebud, South Dakota.

Honored by the Moon (1990, 15 minutes) was Smith's next video project; she served as producer and co-director. Smith had begun work on the Minnesota American Indian AIDS Task Force as an organizational member, then as a board of

directors member. She produced this film in conjunction with this task force. Honored by the Moon was broadcast on KBDI-TV (Denver, CO) and shown at numerous national and international festivals, including a screening at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1991. Smith then worked with the Native American Cultural Arts Program as an advisory board member in 1989 and served on the development committee of the Two Rivers' Native Film and Video Festival in 1990-1991. This festival highlights Native North American film and video and is one of several festivals in the United States focusing solely on Native Americans and curated by Indian people. ⁶

Smith co-wrote, produced and directed That Bridge: Stories of Hope, Stories of Fear in 1989. It was screened at the Program to Aid Victims of Sexual Assault in Duluth, Minnesota, and at the Video Artists' Showcase, Walker Arts Center, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

In 1989, Smith wrote, produced and co-directed That Which is Between (8 minutes) with Nan Tosky. This video will be the focus of this chapter, although I draw on analyses of Her Giveaway and Honored by the Moon. That Which is Between was broadcast on KBDI-TV (Denver) and KTCA-TV (Minneapolis/St. Paul) as part of the "Arts over AIDS: Three Videos" series. The video was screened at the Minneapolis Walker Arts Center, The New York American Indian Community House Gallery, Two Rivers Gallery, American Indian Center and at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Smith then went on to write, produce and direct

Interruption in the Journey in 1990 for the AIDS Survival Group. Her most recent accomplishment is a segment on a Lakota woman with AIDS for the ITVA series Positive: Living With AIDS which was broadcast in select markets on PBS affiliates in the Fall of 1995 and Winter of 1996.

Video Notes: That Which is Between

This 1989 video is a collaboration of urban Native and non-Native people from the North American continent: Abenaki, Yupik, Dakota, Lakota, Anishinabe, Maya and more. Smith writes in the film's synopsis that they "came together to share with each other stories and wisdom about healing, about death, about the future and how to live." ⁷ This is a lyrical video which explores the juncture of Native spirituality and the process of living with AIDS day-to-day. Its experimental-documentary hybridity includes live action footage, special effects, animation, embedded narratives within the video, music and voices interwoven to create a tone-poem piece about healing, fear, and loneliness. In its evocative use of video imagery, it alludes to Indian healing ceremonies but does not communicate them directly. Direct representation of ceremony has been a note of controversy among Native producers and directors. Leuthold indicates that portraying "'aborginality' becomes an ascription to be negotiated more as a commodity than as a recognition of content or authority" (53). He continues:

Some White and Native producers may threaten this system of accountability in their desire to package information for a wider audience, profiting from ideas and values guarded closely by generations of Native Americans.

The potential effect of some directors and writers plumbing Indian belief systems for subject matter goes beyond financial exploitation; intentionally or not, it attacks the basis of Native Americans' collective identity (53).

Ceremonies and other practices are held sacred, and to capture them on video tape is not acceptable to many Indians who are protective of their culture and guarded of Anglo appropriation and retribution. It is as if a collective memory of the Wounded Knee slaughter to quell the Ghost Dance movement still rings in the minds of visual artists. Leuthold writes that

The very existence of group identity depends upon shared but secret information... Masayesva's concern about the ready availability of information to outsiders -- the overexposure of backstage group behavior -- reveals an intuitive understanding that such access may ultimately undermine Native American collective identity (55).

That Which is Between provides a glimpse into the complexity of Native cosmologies/philosophies (Smith). The title refers to the ultimate mystery which connects all things -- a space of consciousness between, within, and without the world. The video conveys the cyclical nature of the personal journey involved in living with an illness. According to Smith, the "program is about AIDS only because many Native people view AIDS as an opportunity for us all to face global imbalance, to learn about healing, and to more fully incorporate our spirit ways in our lives."

In many ways the film is about addressing mainstream images of Indians. Smith says it's also "for all those

folks who think...Indians are cute, and who think our animal stories are adorable." In addition, Smith calls this her most personal, selfish video. The video communicates the complexity of Indian thought at the same time communicating a sense of what it is like to embrace your fear and darkness. Smith heard Carole Lafavor say in an interview for the video, "AIDS is a gift." This statement changed her entire perspective about illness and learning life lessons and Smith says she wanted to capture this on video. A friend of Smith's had seen the film once and did not know quite what to make of it. After his mother died he called her and said, "now I know what my mother was doing, she was healing herself."

Video Notes:

Her Giveaway: A Spiritual Journey with AIDS

This 1988 video was produced for the five reservations in Minnesota very early in AIDS video activism work. It is an educational-documentary video which focuses on the life of Carole LaFavor, a Lesbian woman living with AIDS. Carole, an Ojibwe, is supported in the video by friends, doctors, and family who all contribute to educating the audience about the misunderstandings and hysteria about AIDS. Carole talks about combining her traditional beliefs and healing practices with western medicine in her acceptance of the disease as a part of life's journey. The title itself reflects this. A giveaway in Native tradition refers to a gift, token or sacrifice of something in exchange for a teaching, healing, ceremony, or prayer. The

giveaway is a sharing of what one has to show that one cares. ⁸

The initial target audience for the video was small, but concerted efforts went into production because Smith thought that it might be the only video that this specialized audience saw. To her surprise and delight, within months the video was being circulated internationally. The video fights the various myths about AIDS, but Carole's presence also gives inspiration to the Native community. She says that if the community wants to fight AIDS, it needs to return to a "place within the soul...which brings comfort...and sustains us." Mona Smith commits to continuing her leadership and educators' role in the Native community by providing resource information on AIDS at the end of the video, and listing American Indian support organizations.

Video Notes: Honored by the Moon

This 1990 video is a documentary about gay and lesbian Native Americans which was compiled during a conference for American Indian gays, lesbians, bisexuals and their friends and supporters. Smith says that the video is specifically aimed at adolescent gay Indians. "Every [production] choice was made with this in mind," she says, including the messages at the end, which like Her Giveaway, are a list of relevant readings, American Indian organizations, and AIDS organizations.

Primarily constructed in the head-and-shoulder interview format representing the Inyupik, Lakota, Ojibwa,

Mohawk and Delaware nations, the video has two purposes. It discusses "the historical place occupied in traditional Native American societies by gay and lesbian individuals" and provides "role models who encourage contemporary people grappling with 'coming out' that assistance and counseling are available" (Ridinger 682). Historical photographs, interviews, lunar images, music and voices are woven together to relate the spiritual aspects of homosexuality. "The viewer learns that Native Americans considered homosexuality a strangeness, an apartness, deserving of honor. Traditionally, it was seen as a special gift bestowed upon an individual" (On The Issues). Gay men and women are honored because they are thought to be able to walk through two worlds -- the male and female. Honored by the Moon represents the feminist aesthetic because it presents sexuality in a radically new way. This representation counters hegemonic portrayals in dominant media.

The Documentary and Experimental Impulse

in Native American Cinema

An initial aesthetic agenda of Indigenous filmmaking is to correct dominant popular media images. This results in the predominant use of documentary or non-fiction. Leuthold writes that "documentary becomes a form of truth-speaking, a way of accurately recording and presenting both history and contemporary lives in contrast to the fictive world portrayed in popular imagery" (51). Moreover, the

development of a Native aesthetic often results in a hybrid form combining documentary, narrative and experimental techniques. This hybridity reflects the developing aesthetic of Native North Americans who construct different ways of telling stories. Leuthold quotes Tom Beaver who says that "For many Indian nations, our oral history was the tradition. That is the same tradition here, whether radio, television or film" (51). Oral histories weave realistic accounts in and out, but with elaborations. The use of tales and fables, allegories, anecdotes, lessons, commentaries, sermons, myth, and other oral techniques are common to this form. There are various languages and languaging techniques in the oral tradition that are now being applied to cinema.

Smith's video aesthetics operate from a place of hybridity but are grounded in non-fiction for educational purposes. Hybridization is anything of mixed origin. Bakhtin defines hybridization as "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses" (358). Contemporary Native American poetry critics like Robin Riley-Fast also recognize this use of multiple languages in writing because the poetry is "dialogic: it has antecedents in traditional song, chant, and story, forms that are generally anonymous, tribal, or communal rather than authored by one person" (512). Riley-Fast indicates that "language dominated by heteroglossia is dialogic, marked by 'a constant interaction

between meanings'" (512).

Mona Smith's visual work is reminiscent of the dialogics of poetry. Her work is layered with various elements which all contribute to the range of meaning(s) one can read from her videos. Although Smith works primarily in documentary, she incorporates what are defined in mainstream film criticism as experimental techniques into her non-fiction aesthetic. The feminist narratological perspective recognizes her challenges to dominant, patriarchal story structure as well as providing spaces for multiple marginalized voices.

Focusing her work on Native Americans and homosexuality and AIDS as subject matter recognizes multiple differences and multiple reasons for oppression by dominant groups. Smith also operates from a marginal space as a non-lesbian woman who explores issues within the gay and bisexual community. Her video work is a constant reminder of the politics of being inside and outside of cultural representation. She is in many ways aware of these distinctions and of her role as a conceptual/collaborative constructor of images and truth-telling "fictions."

Smith accomplishes what early feminist film scholars called for in defining the "women's film." Her work counters mainstream images and form, it develops a new language with which to communicate through video and film and it examines content and persons who have been traditionally marginalized within dominant society.

Like Julie Dash, Smith also focuses on a sense of

history by correcting the inaccurate images of Native Americans in mainstream media. This sense of redemptive memory is a quality of feminist narrative. She focuses on a sense of the communal -- the gay community -- within a larger Native community for the purposes of healing and self transformation. ⁹ In some cases she also focuses on people living with AIDS in the gay community, within the larger Indian community, and within the dominant culture. Smith's work with various persons who are traditionally marginalized illustrates her ability to locate spaces (circles) of power without falling into the trap of stereotypic, centrist representation.

Narratology and The Hybrid Film/Video Form

The field of narrative studies was developed to understand fiction. Michael Renov writes that the aim of poetics is

...to submit aesthetic forms to rigorous investigation as to their composition, function and effect -- this field of study has become a kind of proving ground for the relations between science and art (20).

What implications will result if we then apply the tenets of narratology to non-fiction and hybrid forms of cinema? Bill Nichols (1991) writes that "cinema presents us with images of things. Images are mimetic distractions and counterfeiting; they cannot engage our reason nor nourish our hunger for Truth" (Representing Reality 3). The dramatic-fiction form is a form of fantasy being studied by a methodology of (scientific) truth. Yet the educational documentaries of Mona Smith, like many other documentaries,

are truth seeking videos. Moreover, documentary films use the same dramatic stratagem as fictional films. Nichols claims that "documentary film has a kinship with other nonfictional systems," what he calls discourses of sobriety like science, politics, education, religion (3). And these systems "assume they have instrumental power, they can and should alter the world itself, they can effect action and entail consequence" (3). These "discourses of sobriety are sobering because they regard their relation to the real as direct, immediate transparent" (Nichols 4). Narratology itself is a discourse of poetic sobriety, which has traditionally examined only discourses of fiction.

The films and videos that are truth seeking and truth serving by pointing to social issues that audiences should be aware of are not fiction, but rather they are documentary and even perhaps experimental documentary. Nichols writes that fiction "attends to unconscious desires and latent meaning. It operates where the id lives" and "harbors echoes of dreams and daydreams, sharing structures of fantasy with them, whereas documentary mimics the canon of expository argument, the making of a case" (4). Mona Smith makes educational "cases" in her video work but does so through a Native American cosmology which recognizes dreams, memory and the unconscious. Truth is a complex concept. So she effectively combines the documentary and fictional aesthetic qualities and forms. Documentary, Nichols writes, "fails to identify any structure or purpose of its own entirely absent from fiction or narrative" (5). Therefore,

narratology is a potential method to examine both fictional/narrative and documentary forms of cinema.

In developing a "poetics of documentary" Michael Renov first traces the inquiry of poetic studies. Literary poetics have been historically linked to rhetorical culture and more recently to the science of language. Narratology examines the structure and functions of a text, attempting in many ways to discover laws of fiction. This relates to what Nichols calls the texts of sobriety -- truth telling texts like documentary -- because they relate to scientific inquiry. So using the tenants of narratology, we can study documentary film because both the form and the method of examining the form share in their search of inherent "Truths". In addition, documentary continues to use the methods of fictional narrative to communicate those truths. Nichols writes that

...documentary can depend on narrative structure for its basic organization...this shape provides a beginning from which an unstable state of affairs emerges, a middle in which a problem gains in force and complexity, and an ending in which some form of resolution occurs (Representing Reality 6).

Unfortunately this quote illustrates the ease with which Nichols buys into the patriarchal narrative structure, even though he shows sophistication for gender difference in other areas of documentary criticism and theory. A feminist narratology will also assist critical work in documentary, whose critics may fail to recognize the relevance of gender in textual construction and address. The hybrid form also

"incorporates concepts of character development and subjectivity, continuity or montage editing, and the invocation of off-screen space" (Nichols Representing Reality 6).

If we study non-fiction and other film forms through the method developed solely for narrative studies, we also must consider contingencies of difference in documentary. Representational poetics are political. Gender, race, ethnicity, regionality and other cultural or ideological concerns affect documentary address and form, as it affects fictional narrative. Renov writes that "in the examination of the documentary film...the formal characteristics that define the cycles or styles...are historical and ideologically contingent" (19). And that "these works, though they aim for an intellectual rigor and a precision of formulation, cannot fairly be pigeon-holed as formalist or unself-consciously scientific" (Renov 19-20). No work, whether intellectually rigorous or fictional fantasy can be labelled as unself-consciously scientific. Nichols concurs with the dependence of ideology on images. He writes that

Ideologies beginning with those of gender, will attach themselves to this imaginary sense of self...Ideologies will also offer representations in the form of images, concepts, cognitive maps, worldviews and the life to propose frames and punctuation to our experience. Such ideologies are inescapable...Images are at the heart of our construction as subjects...They can be joined together with words or other images into systems of signs, and hence meaning. They can be formed and organized into a text (Representing Reality 9).

This brings us back to the purpose of this study -- combining narratology with a feminist perspective -- to recognize the ideological influences on texts while simultaneously conducting close examination of those texts from a rigorous framework of poetics. This study is aligned with what Renov calls the "conjoining of 'poetics' and 'politics.'" Each term functions reciprocally as 'an addition that comes to make up for a deficiency' without the surrender to an absolute exteriority" (Renov 20).

Renov's "four fundamental tendencies of documentary" (21) and Nichols "documentary modes of representation" (Representing Reality 32-34) will inform the narratological reading of both Mona Smith and Trinh Minh-ha's work because they demonstrate "that contingencies of a political and historical character have their place within a poetics framework" (Renov 20). Documentary and narrative are not as different as audiences think, nor as cinema critics may have proposed. Their conscious operation may serve different purposes -- fantasy or truth telling -- but they share many of same techniques and modes of address. In addition, all storytelling and storytellers lie or tell the truth for their own intentions because film and video are just constructions of various truths. Constructed cinematic truths are full of ambiguities, complexities and gaps in accuracy. Trinh Minh-ha writes that "truth lies in between all regimes of truth" ("The Totalizing Quest of Meaning" 90). And Nichols adds that

Documentary film may not provide as direct or

scenic a route to the unconscious as most fiction does. Documentary films, though are part and parcel of the discursive formations, the language games, and rhetorical stratagems by and through which pleasure and power, ideologies and utopias, subjects and subjectives receive tangible representations (Representing Realty 10).

Focalization and Voice in That Which is Between

Both Nichols and Renov have developed theoretical postures about documentary which related directly to the narratological understanding of focalization and voice. In both theorists' work, the documentary film can be categorized by modes of representation and address -- that is, how they are voiced and focalized. The individual non-fiction film will then be organized and structured based on this purpose of address. Cinematic narration serves narrative perspective. For example, Renov (1993) states four purposes of the documentary film : (1) to record, reveal or preserve; (2) to persuade or promote; (3) to analyze or interrogate; and (4) to express. I would like to add a fifth narrative category which synthesizes the previous four: (5) to educate. Education, more than any of the other four tendencies, integrates the others. These are not exclusive "categories" but rather ways to understand the mode of address inherent in the construction of the text and its narrative presentation to spectators.

Nichols (1991) defines modes of representation as "basic ways of organizing texts in relation to certain recurrent features or conventions" (32). He notes four

modes of representation: (1) expository, (2) observational, (3) interactive, and (4) reflexive. Recent personal documentary primarily by feminist filmmakers calls for a fifth mode of representation that I call the "diarist" mode ("Zen and the Art of Documentary"). In many ways this is like the educational purpose of documentary that I add to Renov's model. The diary-personal documentary intersects Nichols other four modes of address. This was also recently discussed at the 2nd International Documentary Congress as the "personal mode" (International Documentary). These modes of address are most influential in the narratological categories of focalization. The techniques used, and the manner in which the film is narrated (its use of "expert witnesses," stock footage or photographs, animation, narrator(s), etc.) will serve the perspective from which the film operates.

Mona Smith's video work is primarily focalized from both the educational and expressive modes. Renov claims that

The communicative aim is frequently enhanced by attention to the expressive dimensions; the artful film or tape can be said to utilize more effectively the potentialities of its chosen medium to convey ideas and feelings. In the end, the aesthetic function can never be wholly divorced from the didactic one insofar as the aim remains 'pleasurable learning' (35).

In her teachings on AIDS to the Native community, Smith uses the expressivity that a Native aesthetic might employ, through animation, song, images and multiple voiced testaments. There is no concept of time or space except the

story space of the teaching.

In That Which is Between, Smith constructs a teaching which is focalized through a poetic perspective. Although the internal focalizers shift, the primary way the film is narrated is through an expressionistic filter. She accomplishes this by using several techniques of voice. There are multiple character narrators and cinematic narration, which reflects a multi-media (multi-channeled) presentation.

The film opens with Amos Owen, Dakota spiritual leader, saying, "The world is in a turmoil today." This introduces the conflict or problem that will be addressed in the video. This also invokes the Native American respect for the elders and teaching that what we do today affects the Earth up to seven generations from now. We never see the old man again, but his initial presence suggests a teaching by an elder that is important for Native survival. The sound track, including drums, flute music and a heartbeat, come under. Combining these elements together reinforces the importance of the drum to the heart(beat) center of Native cosmology. It also suggests the Native tradition of music coming from the heart as a means of expression, communication and education, not purely for entertainment. Smith will use similar music in all of her videotapes. The musical segments are transition devices between the various visual and aural elements she uses to narrate the video teachings.

Through a series of animated special effects, we are told a story about the earth and animals. This is the first

embedded narrative within the video and it offers glimpses of the Native storytelling tradition. An accompanying female voice over says: "We used to have twelve sacred trees, now we have only six. The burrowing animals are living above ground, mother earth is too hot. Mother earth nurtures us and we need to nurture her." This opening omniscient voice indicates that the video is about environmentalism and healing. The relationship of healing between humans, animals and the earth is established poetically. A voice over then says "AIDS can teach us." A dissolve shows smoke rising up, and through this the title appears: That Which is Between. Through the video's cinematic narration (i.e. smoke, sound, dissolve transition), we know we are entering the place of in-between, a dream state which will offer the lesson of healing through understanding the experience of AIDS, at least on a symbolic level.

In addition to combining various elements of voice for didactic purposes, Smith frequently uses dissolves as transition devices. These continually reinforce the holistic relationship of the elements in the videotape, even though individually these elements may not appear related. An old man, a turtle, animals, a red screen, sage burning in a shell are meaningless unless the techniques of the cinematic narrator reveal that they are partners in the entire cosmos of the video.

A close up of sage burning in a shell is accompanied by an omniscient voice saying "ceremony teaches us about the

connections of all things. Ceremony takes us out of the everyday, ordinary ways of life. It is the here beyond." This voiceover can be defined as both heterodiegetic and personal, because the narrator does not appear in the story that is being recounted, but she is a character reporting or witnessing that story world and subsequent lesson. It is interesting to note that the voice overs are performed by different people but remain female throughout the course of the videotape. Voice over narration cannot be attributed to one person, rather this represents the circle of women in the process of healing the mother (earth).

The next verbalized section is a group of voices which communicate the "in between" lesson through poetic dialogue. The multiple voice chorus is repeated several times through the video. The importance of using multiple voices in recounting the narrative, as Julie Dash did in Daughters of the Dust, is reflected in these sections. No one person is central in the narrative, rather the characters exist on a hoop of narrative expression.

The chorus is indicated visually as well, either before or in unison with the speaking voices. Visually we see smoke moving through the sky. A circle is superimposed onto the screen. The men's and women's voices say: "We meet. We Meet. In that which moves between. That which whispers within. That which is without." Throughout this voicing Smith dissolves between various images. The visuals dissolve from the hoop superimposed on the sky to flames framed through logs on a fire, smoke, and trees seen through

the filter of heat waves.

The pace of the video quickens when the voices punch up "The now here point of healing." Dissolves again take us through the earth's elements as we hear the natural sounds of nature: the moon, sky, birds, grass, red leaves on a tree, a barren branch, a winter prairie, a field, a winter stream, and tree branches against the sky. Cinematic narration reinforces the connection of healing to the earth. The visuals also move through the seasons, beginning with Summer and ending with Spring and the return of life to a sleeping earth. Moving water and buds on branches indicate this.

The sounds of drumming comes under as an animated effect illustrates black birds moving across green, white and red bands of color. An animated drum appears and its leather straps blow with the wind. A female voice enters saying "The spiral dance of time within. Blood pulsing. Heart singing. Death is part of our journey. Death is part of life. Night is part of the day." The connection of human death to the death of earth is underscored by intradiegetic narrative voice. The story of the sacred twelve trees now makes more sense. If we do not heal the earth, we will also become sick and be fewer in number.

Like Julie Dash in Daughters of the Dust, Mona Smith incorporates a sense of spirituality into her video work. The voice says: "A prayer to the spirits bond like flesh to those before. They leave us wisdom of their living. They dance in the sky." The accompanying visuals dissolve

between the northern lights, smoke, a close-up, front shot of a man eating a strawberry, a close-up of a hand dropping the berry, a medium shot of the man, screen right eating a strawberry and an animated yellow reindeer in a storm. Through expressive cinematic narration, sky, spirit, animals, nature, human existence and sustenance are presented as connected. The commentative narration suggests the relation of indigenous persons to spirituality that is different from Judeo-Christian forms.

The chorus of multiple character narrators return: "Of that which moves between. That which whispers within. That which is without." This vocal narration accompanied by the same fire through the logs, rising smoke, and trees through the heat waves serves as a transition to the next embedded narrative within the primary narrative. The language of this embedded narrative is voiced in a way to suggest a past event, a flashback. However, it serves a more allegorical function. The story can be past, present, or to come. It is timeless. So the embedded narration can be understood as a "teaching" within the context of the video which is itself about healing. The embedded narrative contextualizes fear and loneliness within the larger framework of illness and healing. We see a close up of folded hands which dissolve to a ground level shot of snow in the woods. These are the storyteller's hands, and she takes us to the place of the embedded "teaching" narration. A song is sung communicating the story of the lost girl.

The embedded narration is about a young girl who

becomes lost in the woods. It is the closest to a mainstream, fictional narrative representation that Smith gets in any of her work. The story is portrayed as a reenacted narrative. We hear a voice over tell the story of the girl as the music fades:

She lost her way. Day turned to night. She felt small and alone. Finally she found her way home. Grandmother asked: And what my child did you learn today? She told of her being lonely, she told of being afraid. And grandmother said: that is good. And now you know them...you can be friends with your loneliness and friends with your fear.

When the story is over, Smith adds a subjective camera travelling through the woods at a frantic speed to reinforce the sense of fear. A subjective camera suggests that we are running through the woods, lost and afraid. A negative effect is added to the subjective camera. The negative image effect in black and white reverses the light and dark areas of the original subject. Then a red pulsing is added to the negative effect. These alterations from realistic subjective vision to an expressionistic subjective vision take us into that "in between" space that the multiple narrators talk about. It is a place of fear, loneliness, dreams, and prayer. It is also a place where the ancestors have been and where the earth is now, so it is never a place where we are alone. The narratorial chorus returns: "We dance. We dance. We dance," as a single female narrator says in unison with a heartbeat, "with the rhythm of our fear. Eyes wide. Recognizing. Understanding. Befriending the Unknown is all we have. In the heat of the fire. The

endless night." The multiple voices return: "And that which moves between. That which whispers within. That which is without." Smith continues with the visual patterns she has established throughout the video using elements of nature to communicate the lesson of human fear and frailty.

We are then introduced to a new character narrator. If we are familiar with Smith's other work, we recognize this on screen character narrator as Carole LaFavor, a Native woman living with AIDS. The intertextuality of repeating character narrators through several of her videos is exemplary of Smith's collaborative/conceptual narration. We can trace the presence of Carole's character and her influence on AIDS activism in the Indian community. Carole LaFavor also provides voice over and consultation for this video along with several other Native Americans that Smith notes as "collaborators" in the end credits.

Through a slow motion (skip frame) effect, we see Carole trimming the branches on a tree. We hear an omniscient narrator (which is Mona Smith herself) say, "perhaps if we embrace the lessons of AIDS." Carole's voice says "AIDS is a gift." The narrator (Smith) returns with "perhaps if we embrace..." and it fades to Carole's voice again up full. "The scene with Carole pruning the tree is a non-verbal expression of 'clearing out the dead wood,' 'getting to the essentials.'" ¹⁰

Through the use of internal and external narration and the slow speed effect, the "in-between" space is again reinforced. This questions the portrayal of realism in

documentary by offering a different perspective of representation. AIDS is real to Carole and to many other people, but their experiences with the healing process move beyond realism to a space "in-between" reality (this world) and death (the after world). People living with AIDS are those who occupy a space between the real world and the spirit world. When Carole says, "AIDS is a gift," she means AIDS has taught her how to live a spiritual and activist life and provide these teachings to her community. Carole's voice over continues, "Living the lifestyle of a spiritual person is the most important thing any of us can do whether we're experiencing severe illness or wonderful health." Through the multiple voices and the poetic visual cinematic narration, the teachings about health, spirituality, fear and facing that fear are expressively communicated.

The multiple voice chorus returns with "We hear. We hear. We hear. The songs to sing. The four legged. The winged. The flowing. Making whole all one -- one all." These voices are accompanied by the now familiar nature visuals.

Each time the chorus is repeated it is introduced in a slightly different way. We meet, we breathe, we dance, we hear, we laugh, and we see, begin each performance of the chorus. Smith takes us through stages in the teaching. We meet our fear, breath it into our bodies, learn to dance with it like the little lost girl, hear the lessons of loneliness, laugh with others who we learn experience the same feelings and see the endless possibilities of living a

spiritual life which welcomes all experiences and emotions.

By changing the script slightly, the narrative becomes focalized through a commentative perspective. This commentary is at the root of documentary address. As viewers are asked to confront the "malleability of meaning and ideological impact of authorial or stylistic choices," they are also asked by the video/film art to enquire, evaluate, learn, offer a judgement, argue, associate, act, or relate (Renov 32). The primary difference between documentary/non-fiction (narrative) and fictional narrative is one of perspective. The documentary knows it portrays the "real," and viewers are often attracted to this discourse of authenticity. But the film form works toward specific purposes and often from locations of rhetorical invisibility. Smith places her real lessons of AIDS and illness within a poetic language to avoid the "real" representation of illness and death -- weight loss, blindness, incontinence, skin lesions, pain, rejection, anger, and the countless other experiences persons with AIDS move through. Although according to Smith, "the long term AIDS survivors describe their lives as not being full of the reality of lesions, and health crisis...but rather, figuring out how to live their lives. Kind of like everybody, only with a different sense of time and urgency." ¹¹

The modes of address appear to be more transparent in the non-fiction form because we think them to be more "real." But as Nichols notes "Documentaries offer pleasure and appeal while their own structure remains virtually

invisible, their own rhetorical strategies and stylistic choices largely unnoticed" (Representing Reality x).

Smith's realism is expressed in the Native aesthetic of symbolism. In many Native American traditions, the "real" world is not the Earthly world. An interview subject in Honored by the Moon talks about the place of gay and lesbian Native Americans. He says that these people are between two sides -- male and female. They walk in the middle of two worlds -- the physical world (a shadow world) and the real world which is the world of connections, ancestry and spirit.

One primary technique of documentary is to include live action footage of realistic events. The text represents what we consider "accurate" because it is actual. Both Honored by the Moon and Her Giveaway: A Spiritual Journey with AIDS offer much more realism than That Which is Between. The two former videos are constructed primarily through voice overs combined with cut-away, live-action footage and on camera interviews. These two videos align with the storytelling (oral) aspect of the Native Aesthetic because individuals share their experiences for purposes of teaching. That Which is Between offers a much more symbolic view of documentary, a form which is closely aligned with the "visual" theories of a Native aesthetic that Masayesva and Smith speak about. Space and time are subservient to a visual language of expression and imagination.

That Which is Between continues with live action footage of people socializing and laughing in a circle as

the voice over says, "We Laugh. We Laugh. Playing the tricks. Poking the Pompous. Knowing the power...of that which moves between..." and the chorus is repeated.

The final part of the lesson in healing is coming to terms with Native American identity, although the entire video is about this in many ways. Smith has already indicated this through her previous inclusion of animal stories, references to ceremony, burning of sage, and connection to nature. The single voice over says, "There is always a time of preparation. We must prove our willingness." A blue square is superimposed on the screen with a double outline. This doubling effect indicates the place where Native Americans, especially urban Indians, feel themselves to be in relation to the dominant Anglo world. They are both within their own world and within the frame of the dominant white world. Negotiating this doubleness is a healing that will also take place through connection to ancestral spirit teachings. Smith says this arch represents the gateway to the spiritual world (August 5, 1996). As the multiple narrators say, "We see. We see. We see. We are ready, all anew. In that which moves between. That which whispers within. That which is without," we see the literal split in Native identity. A person (Yako) appears on the screen in close up, framed inside the blue lines. A zoom out and split screen dissolve reveals two faces of that same person. They face each other -- one in traditional Native dress and one in urban clothes. This split represents her spirit and physical selves.

The video ends with visuals that reference the four elements of fire, earth, water and air (sky) which complement the circularity of the video piece. Understanding all the elements that work toward natural balance will facilitate personal healing. The moon is superimposed onto still lake water, then the colors of a green earth are superimposed onto this. The final layer is a flame superimposed on top of the pulsating blue moon and other visuals. The multiple voices speak separately saying, "That which paints the sacred mystery. That which was there all our time." The voices reunite to complete the video with "That which holds the healing."

Focalization and Voice in

Honored by the Moon and

Her Giveaway: A Spiritual Journey with AIDS

Similar themes continue in Honored by the Moon and Her Giveaway: A Spiritual Journey with AIDS. Personal growth and strength are emphasized through testimonials. In Honored by the Moon gay and lesbian Indians are portrayed in a revolutionary way. Through interviews we learn that in pre-European America, gay and lesbian persons were revered within their tribes as holy people. One woman says that there were cross dressers who were teachers and elders who shared information about sexuality as well as same and mixed sex activities. A different woman confirms these portrayals saying that gays and lesbians were spiritual leaders and healers who provided a sense of continuity, values and maintenance of tradition. Historically, these persons were

often called upon to raise orphans.

Carole LaFavor's story in Her Giveaway... illustrates these historical images in a contemporary era. The manner in which she is portrayed is that of a heroine who actively fights for AIDS education and support. She educates the Native community. She is surrounded by many friends and supporters. And most importantly, her illness is a gift from the creator for the purposes of her social and personal giveaways of education, support and leadership.

Multiple voices work in all of Smith's films to communicate the various messages about healing, AIDS, or sexuality. This emphasizes community over individuality. In That Which is Between, we hear multiple voices performing the script. In Honored by the Moon and Her Giveaway..., multiple character narrators in the form of on camera and voice over interviews serve as multiple witnesses or testaments to the subject matter.

The tendency or mode of address is that of the educator in all of Smith's work. Information is communicated through a variety of sources both oral and visual. And this information, as Smith says, is often geared toward very specific audiences. Developing Honored by the Moon for adolescent gay Indians, Smith includes a section on identity, role models, and coming out. She has five different people speak about the personal and emotional challenges of being gay. These character narrators focus on the positive aspects of being yourself in a world that asks you to be something else. One person states that she is a

role model and her story is available for "those younger or yet to come out of isolation." Honored by the Moon ends with a story told by a lesbian Native woman. Smith says she relates her role as a videomaker and storyteller to this woman's role as an activist for gay and lesbian rights. The woman says,

I see myself as mowing a large field with one gallon of gas. That gas will run out inevitably when my life runs out. And there's going to be someone coming behind me with another gallon of gas and they'll mow it as far as they can...to clear the path for those that come after us.

Conceptual and Collaborative Narration:

Mona Smith as Native Leader

Mona Smith exemplifies collaborative/conceptual narration. She actively includes her "collaborators" in the video credits, acknowledging the community of creators that construct these kinds of visual storytelling devices. In the collaborative/conceptual role, Smith also serves as a leader in the Native community. Her videos are filled with conscious didacticism and she states that choices are made directly dependent on the audience she intends to reach. Nichols' category of the interactive documentary address is dependent on the presence of the director within the video. Nichols suggests that in the interactive mode, "the filmmaker's voice could be heard as readily as any other...on the spot, in face-to-face encounter with others" (44). This mode "stresses images of testimony or verbal exchange and images of demonstration" and "introduces a sense of partialness, of *situated* presence and *local*

knowledge that derives from the actual encounter of filmmaker and other" (44). The filmmaker's presence is also seen in the diarist mode that I describe. These films place the filmmaker as the films' central subject. Collaborative/conceptual narration is also present to some extent in Nichols' reflexive mode, which calls direct attention to the methods, forms, and techniques of documentary into each film text. Reflexive documentaries look at themselves as constructed/collaborative texts.

One technique that Smith uses after the closing credits in both Honored by the Moon and Her Giveaway... is to include title information with additional resources. These are not part of the diegetic film text but are included through authorial/constructive placement of titles for educational purposes. Smith lists suggested readings like The Spirit and the Flesh (W. Williams), Living the Spirit (compiled by gay American Indians) and Gay American History (Jonathan Katz). Smith also lists organization phone numbers like the Minnesota AIDS Taskforce or National AIDS Hotline. Smith is understood to voice a collaborative/conceptual Native aesthetic in these sections as she serves a leadership role in the audio-visual portrayal, representation and history of Indians.

In addition to the realistic elements in Honored by the Moon and Her Giveaway..., there is also the presence of strong symbolic elements. Shots of the waxing and waning moon, still historic photographs of Native Americans, smoke, flute music, drumming, sky shots, and tree branches, among

others suggest an authorial intrusion which constructs a Native identity. Although Smith jokes about the use of many of these visuals, she uses them frequently in her videos as a kind of self-reflexive language. Their use calls attention to the racial and ethnic identity of the filmmaker and her intended audience. It is a language that needs translation for many Anglo audiences but not for Native audiences.

Implications of a Feminist Narratology in the Work of Mona Smith

Smith's work is centered on developing a Native aesthetic, regardless of gender difference. The first step is to assume responsibility in the larger group with which she identifies. Then other differences can be examined. And although this is the foundation of her work, a feminist aesthetic can be seen in some ways in her work.

The first way Smith serves a feminist narratology is through subject matter which has traditionally held positions of marginality. Examining gay and lesbian relationships on film is one theme that feminists have pioneered. Initial critical work on textual spectatorship and pleasure developed into the now prominent field of queer studies. In addition, many feminist lesbians and/or feminist heterosexuals like Amilca Palmer, Lynne Fernie, Aerlyn Weissman, Ulrike Ottinger, Aarin Burch, and Pratibha Parmar found that documentary and experimental forms were adequate to express individual stories of the gay, lesbian and bisexual experience. By working with this topic, Smith

acts as a feminist to offer counter-hegemonic representations of sexuality. She also illustrates the importance of context in narrative inquiry.

Smith's AIDS subject matter is politically charged. She began work on this topic relatively early in comparison to other AIDS related films. She serves not only the gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities, but also the heterosexual Native community in terms of health concerns. If past government action is any indication of public assistance to the Indian community it is clear that they would be the last group to which the government offered AIDS education, health support and resources. Smith's videos serve socially responsible roles which Leuthold indicates is part of the Native aesthetic (1994).

A second way Smith's work indicates a feminist perspective is through the centrality of female characters. By focusing on Carole LaFavor as her primary character, Smith moves a women into the central position of subjectivity. Her voice is the primary means through which audiences learn about AIDS and healing. And in That Which is Between, the presence of omniscient female voice over narrators suggests the importance of women in film subjectivity and in teaching through film and video documentary.

Aesthetically, Smith combines several different elements like animation, song, drumming, live-action, voices, images that reflect ceremony or ritual, and on camera interviews. These elements keep the tradition of

what Masayesva called "Tikiveh," the oral tradition, and translates them to video. And these stories have socially redeeming functions.

"Indian Time" in Narratological Perspective

Traditional understanding of temporal structure and notions of dramatic cause and effect are challenging to discuss in Smith's work because she does not follow this paradigm. One aspect of the Native aesthetic is understanding that there is no sense of constructed time on a linear based model. The material in Smith's videos take place without time reference, or linearity. They can be seen as happening at any time and throughout time. The one aspect of time that is worth mentioning is the notion of "Indian time." This is reflected upon by Anglo-author Judith Fein in Indian Time (1993) about her experiences researching Native culture in Southwestern United States for a public television special. Her first chapter, "Horizontal Woman in a Vertical World," describes her first connection with Indian customs, temporal structure and tradition. According to WayaGola-Shupe,

Indian time is more of a social/cultural construct than a scientific construct. Indian time generally means when things are ready they'll begin, or when a person is ready (s)he'll begin. However, this should not be taken as an absolute, Indians (and any agricultural/gathering [people]) were run as much by the sun and the seasons as by their own whims. ¹²

Smith's videos illustrate this concept of "Indian time," in that they do not follow specific structures that

lead toward an absolute resolution or climactic result. The videos linger, offer information, repeat themselves, and often carry over into each other on a time continuum.

Native American control of film and video production, education, and distribution is still in developmental stages. As a result, Smith focuses her attention on the larger, Native community first and differences of gender second. Once we see more Native originated productions, we will begin to see film and video examples which question issues of gender in the community as well as other differences among Indigenous North Americans. A feminist narratology assists us in understanding how Smith's videos work as feminist texts. A feminist narratology also illustrates the shared goals and challenges that women film and video makers and critics have with other marginalized peoples, like Native Americans as a whole. Can one unifying aesthetic and model with which to examine that aesthetic really be developed? It is better to consider that there are trends in production, textual construction, textual reading and criticism that unify some of the texts some of the time, but the essence of a feminist narrative theory is the rejection of centrally located, unifying master theories.

NOTES

1. All direct quotes by Mona Smith were gathered through two interviews. A telephone interview was conducted in October 1994 and a personal interview in Minneapolis, Minnesota, at the Native Arts Circle was recorded in August 1995.

2. The politics of naming is a difficult challenge in writing this book. Those known as Cherokee, Crow, Lakota, Ojibwa, Choctaw, Anbenaki, Potawatomi, Hopi, Ute, Nez Perce, Chippewa, Black Foot, Blood, Yakima, and the 200 plus Native American nations, have "officially" been named many terms by an oppressive United States government. In this study I use several terms: Native America, Native North American, Indian, Indigenous Americans and Indigenous peoples. It is a challenge I face in writing about a Dakota women filmmaker. It is also one of the greatest challenges in developing the "Native" aesthetic, because among different nations, regions, languages, etc. are different customs, stories, ways of living and being raised in this country. I attempt to use terms that the filmmaker used to describe herself -- the most frequent being the name "Indian."

3. Quotation and information taken from correspondence with Mona Smith via electronic mail letter dated August 5, 1996.

4. Quote taken from electronic mail correspondence between Mona Smith and author on August 5, 1996.

5. Quote taken from electronic mail correspondence between Mona Smith and author on August 5, 1996.

6. There is the Native American Film and Video Festival sponsored by the National Museum of the American Indian/Smithsonian Institution in New York City in the Fall, curated by Elizabeth Weathersford. The film and video resource center at the museum is the "national center for information about native productions and services to independent media makers in the field" (Hirschfelder & Kreipe de Montano 187). The Native American Public Broadcast Consortium (NAPBC), established in 1977, develops and produces public television and radio programs, educational programs, independent film and video programs and offers production and distribution support for programs by, for, and about Native Americans. The First Nations Film and Video Festival of Chicago is now in its fourth year. The American Indian Film Festival is held annually in San Francisco in conjunction with the American Indian Motion Picture Awards Ceremony. The American Indian Film and Video Competition is held in Oklahoma City in June. There are also a number of smaller, native-organized festivals including the Turtle Island Festival (Albany, New York),

Dreamspeakers Festival of Indigenous Film and Video (Edmonton, Canada), the Deadwood Film Festival (South Dakota).

7. Biographical and video information is drawn from an interview conducted with Mona Smith in August 1995, Women Make Movies press and filmmaker files collected in October 1995, and from personal screenings of the video works.

8. Through electronic mail correspondence, Smith notes that the giveaway is different in different nations. "A year after someone dies is one time for a giveaway...you have a feast, you work very hard putting together gifts for those who were important to the person who has gone on and to the family left behind, those who helped. A wedding sometimes has a giveaway. This weekend I was at a party and the painter Amy Cordoba came with gifts to note that she was moving to Taos. She laid a box of jewelry and women's sage, and various gifts (t-shirts, small dolls, buddha statues, etc.) and the folks at the gathering were encouraged to select a gift. She moved way from the collection of gifts quickly and went on visiting with folks. When Rene Whiterabbit arranged for some of her AIDS clients to have a naming ceremony, she held a giveaway as part of the festivities in their honor" (August 5, 1996).

9. The use of the word "community" is not without hesitation. There are many differences within what I refer to as a "community." We see this exemplified in the number of different Nations among Native North Americans, and their regionality, languages, practices, etc. And in the bi/homosexual communities there are differences in sexual expression, race, class, orientation, etc. Discussion of the number of communities existing within what I call the "Native Community" or "Gay Community" suggests a naming which calls for multiple centrism and mobility. These patterns are analogous to infinitesimal circles layered upon one another as if pointing a camera at the screen of a television screen and photographing into a never ending void.

10. Quote from electronic mail correspondence from Mona Smith dated August 5, 1996.

11. Quote taken from electronic mail correspondence from Mona Smith dated August 5, 1996.

12. This quote is taken from a message that appeared on NATCHAT, an INTERNET list server group which offers a forum for discussion on "native" or "indigenous" topics. There were many discussions and personal musings on Indian time primarily by native persons from October 1995-December 1995. This quote best represents the essence of that time which is not in alignment with the Euro-Anglo units of time measurement. From personal experience, when many Native

Americans say "Indian Time," it literally means when the time feels right, when all have gathered, or when the people are ready.

CHAPTER SIX

WITNESSING THE MISFITS OF HISTORY:

IDENTITY, LANGUAGE AND THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATION IN THE THE HYBRID-BOUNDARY CINEMA OF TRINH T. MINH-HA

In a completely catalogued world, cinema is often reified into a corpus of traditions. Its knowledge can constitute its destruction, unless the game keeps on changing its rules, never convinced of its closures, and always eager to outplay itself in its own principles...truth lies in between all regimes of truth (Trinh The Totalizing Quest of Meaning 90).

There is No Such Thing as Documentary: The Truth of Claiming No One Truth

Vietnamese born filmmaker, music composer, writer and educator Trinh T. Minh-ha is one of the most written about experimental documentary filmmakers. She is also productive as a cinema and cultural scholar, writing about the theoretical precepts that she practices and challenges in her film work. Her films are theoretical and critical discourses on language, identity, memory, oppression and representation, much like the themes of her numerous essays and books. Trinh critiques the categories of "otherness," the locationism of first/second and third world and identity, and she questions film form and style, specifically the documentary and experimental genres. Trinh is also concerned about projects of translation, whether that be written, visual or aural, because language itself is so arbitrary.

Trinh's films clearly represent feminist poetics because they dismantle and continually question dominant

filmmaking conventions, universal tendencies of representation, and official histories. Her films also centralize women -- their lives, speaking, societal roles and ways of being (whether 'official' or personal). However, Trinh's films accomplish all of these things at the expense of recuperating mundane women's histories. Her films are densely theoretical and challenging texts to access. She avoids mythologizing women (like Julie Dash does in Daughters of the Dust) in order to explore the real (and painful) issues of post-colonial oppression. Trinh's films centralize women's voices and histories, giving them representation, but in her self conscious depictions, women's bodies and voices are disembodied, distorted and further reconstructed. Trinh represents women. However her feminist agenda might be at the expense of their individual stories and images. Her films use individual women to communicate, examine and critique the larger, structural effects of gender identity. Of the three filmmakers in this study, Trinh Minh-ha's work is the most self-conscious and perhaps the most painful representation of women. These films are about the healing of other women -- especially healing the bodies of women that have been violently represented, colonized, appropriated and fetishized in mainstream visual culture. This healing is done through overt consciousness of those conditions, focusing not on the mythic woman, but on the realities of being a woman in an oppressive world. And through cinematic techniques, which resist the invisibility of dramatic, narrative form, women's

lives become clearer -- their disjointedness, voicelessness, and disembodiment in society begins to take sharper focus.

The most challenging aspect in writing about Trinh or reading any of her films, like Surname Viet Given Name Nam (1989) or Reassemblage (1982) in this study, is how to categorize them. Trinh says she works "at the borderlines of several shifting categories, stretching out to the limits of things, learning about my own limits and how to modify them" (Framer Framed 137).

This study uses these two films for different reasons. Reassemblage was Trinh's first film and illustrates how a short, experimental film can be useful in the narratological field. The film also illustrates how the representation of a different culture from one's own can be constructed which is different from dominant ethnographic portrayals. Surname Viet Given Name Nam was the first film that Trinh completed about Vietnamese women. The film also centralizes women's voices in the recounting of history which provides an excellent text for the study of feminist narrative.

Are her works documentaries, experimental films, or constructed fictions? The difficulty in trying to find a textual form for the filmmaking is exactly what the filmmaker calls attention to in her filmic representations. Her work represents a hybridization of storytelling forms and purposes. Trinh writes that "storytelling is an ongoing field of exploration in all of her works" and that hybridization "refers to a negotiation of the difference not

merely between cultures, between First and Third World, but more importantly within a culture" (144).

Trinh is as hard to "name" or biography as her films. Trinh is a composer, teacher, ethno musicologist, writer, poet, and filmmaker. She is a composite. Trinh says that "the place of hybridity is also the place of my identity" (Framer Framed 129). Filmmaking is a composite of interests, which in Trinh's work, includes the influences of literature, poetry, music, art, folk tradition, dance, and movement along with elements like newsreel footage, canonic film styles and mechanically derived cinematic choices. The next section of this chapter will provide further details about her life and work.

Trinh's film work represents the most self-conscious, apparatus-apparent cinematic expression of the three filmmakers in this study. The feminist narrative that her films embody is one that illustrates women and their roles as historical icons (often iconic images they have traditionally had no influence over). This is also echoed in Julie Dash's Daughters of the Dust and Illusions. As a filmmaker Trinh plays witness to women, images, and identity, as well as the healing that takes place at the juncture of these themes. Like Mona Smith, Trinh is an educator and leader who offers information about people and subjects who have been rendered "invisible" or "silenced" by dominant or colonialized culture. And like Smith, Trinh works in a hybrid form -- combining numerous visual, aural and textual elements to extend the uses, forms and weave of

the cinematic apparatus. Trinh also assumes a political role in feminist filmmaking. She directly questions the representational and structural qualities of the apparatus of cinema itself. She writes that

In the politics of constructing identity and meaning, language as translation and/or film as translation is necessarily a process whereby the self loses its fixed boundaries - - a disturbing yet potentially empowering practice of difference. For me, it is precisely in fighting on more than one front at a time -- that is, in fighting not only against forms of domination and exploitation but also against less easily locatable forms of subjection or of binarist subjectivity -- that the feminist struggle and other protest movements can continue...to resist falling back into the consolidation of conformism (Framer Framed 133).

Trinh's feminist narrative is reflexive and self aware. Like the women's identities and representations that she explores and questions in her films, she explores herself as image maker and as historical witness. So her films work from those powerfully marginal spaces of questioning the center of a dominant, standardized film form -- one that historically needs to catalogue, categorize, explain and place films into generic form. And from this marginal space of cinema expression, which itself lies outside the realm of naming, she questions the centrist notion of naming itself. Trinh's films offer to viewers something akin to a Zen koan: What does a given name mean? Am I the name or am I outside that name while living within it? ¹

There have been efforts to discuss Trinh's films across the discipline of documentary filmmaking. Bill Nichols locates Trinh's films across several of the documentary

modes of address that were identified in Chapter Five.

Naked Space -- Living is Round (1985) is called "Expository" by Nichols. Expository films address the "viewer directly, with titles or voices that advance an argument about the historical world" (Representing Reality 34). The political/ideological question that arises in documentary discourse about how to represent people or reality is managed in a variety of manners within each mode of address. The problems of constructing representational images (women, cultural practices) and the way these images address audiences are central to Trinh's work.

Nichols writes that the expository mode "raises ethical issues of voice; of how the text speaks objectively or persuasively" (Representing Reality 34). There needs to be consideration as to how characters from the "real" world are represented and used by the filmmaker to tell the story. Furthermore, there also needs to be reflection on the process of voiceover narration. The voiceover is an aggressive voice -- one that speaks for another or for the filmic character narrators. In fictional narrative a character narrator can also assume a voiceover narration, but in ethnographic documentary a dominant tradition has been to have a voiceover narrator who is not connected in any way to the world that is represented on screen. This voice over speaks for, about and in explanation of a culture, not from places within that space, but from the outside.

This brings forth the question of documenting truth.

The expository mode of address relies on an internally constructed truth, usually from the dominant culture's perspective. This truth is then presented to viewers. Audiences are not routinely asked to question the truth of the presentation -- only the truths of the diegetic universe that has itself been constructed. In Naked Spaces, Trinh uses the voices of three women narrators. Their primary purpose is to provide commentary rather than explain or interpret like historians or anthropologists. The women represent the levels of witnessing the spaces of, and for, women in West Africa. The female voices are ways of informing or addressing audiences. One voice quotes African writers and villagers' sayings, one communicates the explanatory 'reason' of the West and the final one narrates personal anecdotes and feelings.

Visually the film shows West African villages and the spaces of its architecture. Nichols writes that Trinh subverts the expository mode because it "does not tell us about the history, function, economics, or cultural significance of these particular forms" (36). Rather, through poetic evocation, Trinh "signals an acute awareness that we can no longer assume that our epistemic theories of knowledge provide unproblematic access to another culture" (36). Space is metaphor for cultural and political imperialism. Space is that place of being inside or outside -- a culture, a people -- or your own space of identity. The social and cinematic construction of the "objective" exposition is revealed. Space and empty space become

cinematic techniques that call attention to the spaces filmmakers occupy in their modes of representation. This is also a technique used to illustrate how space is a constant place of negotiation between and within cultures and people.

Because the expository mode offers a "rational" argument, viewers are waiting for the cause-effect world to unfold through a logical linkage of sequences, events, locales, and characters. But Trinh subverts this by having the women's voices provide narration about meaning, interpretation, facts, and values (of the outsider) amidst the images of living space (of the insider). The omniscient "master" voice is problematized as the narratorial voices themselves question documentary authority. Trinh states that there are a number of things she did not want to reproduce in her work, for example

The kind of omniscience that pervades many films, not just through the way the narration is being told, but more generally, in their structure, editing and cinematography, as well as in the effacement of the filmmakers, or the invisibility of their politics of non-location (Framer Framed 113).

Nichols equates this commentary to the reflexive mode of film address arguing that

Trinh Minh-ha refuses to speak for or evoke the poetic essence of another culture, and instead renders the rhetorical strategy of empathy and transcendental unity strange and does so within the terms of a poetic exposition rather than with metacommentary such as a reflexive documentary might adopt (36-37).

Trinh's films also vacillate between the reflexive and interactive modes of address that are identified by Nichols.

The reflexive mode is about representation itself and the process of representation. Nichols writes that the reflexive mode "addresses the question of *how* we talk about the historical world" (Representing Reality 57). He continues that "reflexive texts are self-conscious not only about form and style, as poetic ones are, but also about strategy, structure, conventions, expectations, and effects" (57).

Reassemblage (1982) is a reflexive documentary which addresses if, and how, a filmic representation is adequate and honorable to that reality which it is trying to represent. Reflexivity questions the truth making of documentary. As Nichols asks:

How can the viewer be drawn into an awareness of this problematic so that no myth of the knowability of the world, of the power of the logos, no repression of the unseen and unrepresentable occludes the magnitude of 'what every filmmaker knows': that every representation, however fully imbued with documentary significance, remains a fabrication? (Representing Reality 57).

In the reflexive mode, the filmmaker encounters the viewer first and foremost, then she encounters her subjects. But, she also encounters her subjects with the thought of *how* to represent them to viewers. So the reflexive mode is a negotiation between subjectivity and the conscious witnessing of those subjects.

There are narratorial and feminist ramifications of representation if the intention of the film and filmmaker are to question the narrating process itself and truth in documentary form. Trinh's filmmaking is feminist narrative,

and it is the most self-conscious work in this study. She centers women in the narrative structure, represents images of women's culture, questions dominant filmmaking form and creates new ways of visioning women's realities. Moreover, the repertoire of Trinh's work is linked because the films are documents themselves of insight/enlightenment indicating narration is about narration itself. Trinh's work is the truth of no truth. Hybrid film, and the theory with which we talk about and explain it, cannot adequately move us toward universal truths about representation.

Audiences who are apparently outside of the film experience are invited inside the film world through various gateways of meaning, image, sound and movement. Through the "reading" of Trinh's films or engaging with their narrative strategies, viewers enter into a relationship with the films' subjects. Audiences enter into their lives as they learn about them, listen to them and experience them. Yet audiences also remain outside of the diegetic connection because the film world is a mere translation of the "other" experience or existence. There is no experience of truth or reality, only one representational perspective of that.

Trinh reminds us that power relationships are involved in making a film which represents others. She writes of her visually hesitant camera techniques -- they communicate "understanding that no reality can be 'captured' without trans-forming" (115). As a film is viewed, the viewer negotiates between voyeuristic indulgence and experiential encounter.

Trinh is also an historian, who recounts women's relationships, life stories, experiences and roles through images, words, sound and written languages. She images her witnessing of women as they dwell within the patriarchal structures of naming, categorizing, and systematizing paths of knowledge and wisdom. Trinh interprets women's history as ongoing, ageless, and continuing -- a patterned circle that has no beginning or end -- but one that has to be continually re-discovered and re-written from marginal and mobile spaces. This is why she suggests that we "keep open the space of naming in feminism" (Framer Framed 152). Feminism has many faces and names. Yet women's lives are continually revealed as ancillary and inferior in the structures of modern societies. There is no one truth for women, no center of truth about their lives. Trinh says that "there is nothing objective and truly impersonal in filmmaking" (Framer Framed 119). All that women can own are their personal truth(s). Claiming these through filmic representations challenges the truth centeredness of the Western epistemological condition, but also reveal the condition of dis-continuity in our fragmented, categorized, and dualistic paradigm of human relations.

In the tradition of Zen philosophy, Trinh justifies herself by de-justifying the self. She says "that to move inside oneself, one has to be willing to go intermittently blind" (Framer Framed 119). How we define ourselves is usually in relation, or reaction, to something else -- an image, a voice, language, an arbitrary norm, a rule imposed

by a culture that has no resemblance to our own personal identity. By using the cinematic medium, Trinh questions discourses of representation, because they are inevitably all dominating. Trinh says that "it was when I started making films myself that I really came to realize how obscene the question of power and production of meaning is in filmic representation" (Framer Framed 112-113). And so the truth(s) that are revealed in Surname Viet Given Name Nam and Reassemblage are a series of constructed representations or local truths which betray (T)ruth itself. They are webbed knowledges which illustrate the paradox of truth. The arrangement of images and sounds carries us into a different place of understanding, but whatever truths are revealed are only a fraction of the many truths that can be revealed.

Biographical Notes on Trinh Minh-ha: Insider/Outsider and Insight Cinema

One thing the man said he learned to let go of while in prison, is identity: this singular naming of a person, a race, a culture, a nation (Surname Viet Given Name Nam rpt. in Framer Framed 86).

Trinh was born in Vietnam and came to the United States in 1970. She has lived, studied and taught in Saigon, Vietnam; Paris, France (1974-75); and in Dakar, Senegal, West Africa (1977-80), as well as in the Philippines. Trinh's educational background includes music and theater studies, comparative literature, ethnomusicology, languages

and culture, French literature and music composition. She has held various teaching positions in music, cinema, women's studies, French and literature at several universities from 1970 until the present. Trinh now teaches cinema and women's studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

She has published five books: Framer Framed (1992), on her cinematic work; When the Moon Waxes Red (1991), on representation, gender, cultural politics and creative expression; En minuscules (1987), a book of poems; Un Art sans oeuvre (1981), on the convergence of Eastern and Western thinking in contemporary arts (literature, music, and painting); and Woman Native Other (1989), on Third-World feminisms, postcoloniality and writing. African Spaces, Designs for Living in Upper Volta (1985), written in collaboration with Jean-Paul Bourdier, is an anthropological and architectural study of traditional rural dwellings in Africa. Trinh has also edited Marginalization (1988) with Richard Ferguson, She, The Inappropriate/d Other (No 8 Discourse 1986-87), and Representing Cultures (No 13 Discourse 1989). In addition, Trinh had published numerous articles and chapters on the politics of representation, film and identity, cultural differences, architecture, and cultural politics. Trinh's activity in both theory and practice is informed by her thoughts that

Theory cannot thrive without being rooted in practice, and that practice cannot liberate itself without theory. When one starts theorizing ABOUT film, one starts shutting in the field; it becomes a field of experts

whose access is gained through authoritative knowledge of a demarcated body of 'classical' films and of legitimized ways of reading and speaking about films...It is necessary for me always to keep in mind that one cannot really theorize about film, but only with film. This is how the field stays open (Framer Framed 122).

Interviews with Trinh have been published in journals such as Heresies, Camera Obscura, The Independent, Cinezine, Pheonix and Africulture. The book Framer Framed includes a compilation of interviews as well as film scripts and notes for Naked Spaces -- Living is Round (1982), Reassemblage (1985) and Surname Viet Given Name Nam (1989). Trinh's most recent films include Shoot For Contents (1991) and A Tale of Love (1995), the first "narrative" fictional film she has created.

The film work of Trinh Minh-ha is difficult to categorize and explain, which makes its analysis a useful contribution to a study on feminist narrative. The feministically oriented narrative inquiry questions categorization and lends those variant perspectives of culture, history, personal context and social-political influences to film texts. Trinh says that

Her films have been described as a 'personal film,' as 'personal documentary' or 'subjective documentary.' Although I accept these terms, I think they really need to be problematized, redefined and expanded. Because personal in the context of my films does NOT mean an individual standpoint or the foregrounding of a self. I am not interested in using film to 'express myself,' but rather to expose the social self (and selves) which necessarily mediates the making as well as the viewing of the film (Framer Framed 119).

Trinh's film work has been shown in various venues

including the Whitney Museum of American Art European two-year tour and New American Filmmakers Series, the National Theater (London), the Museum of Modern Art (New York), UNESCO (Dakar, Senegal), the De Young Museum (San Francisco), the Pacific Film Archives, the San Francisco Cinematheque, the Roegon Art Institute Women Directors Series, the Utah Media Center, the Boston Film and Video Foundation and the Robert Flaherty Film Seminars. Trinh received a 'film as Art Award' from The Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Juried festival screenings include those at the American Film Institute, the New York Film Festival, the International Women's Film Festival (New York; Creteil, France; Jerusalem, Israel), the Festival Dei Popoli (Florence, Italy), the Hong Kong International Film Festival, the Asian-American Film Festival, the Toronto Festival of Festivals, the Third World Film Festival (London, England), the American Film Festival (First-Prize, Blue Ribbon for Naked Spaces and Surname Viet Given Name Nam), the Athens Film Festival (Gold Athena for Naked Spaces), the Vancouver Film Festival, the Edinburgh Film Festival (Edinburgh, Scotland), the London Film Festival, the Films de Femmes (Creteil, France), the Bombay International Film Festival where she received a "Certificate of Merit" for Surname Viet Given Name Nam. Her recently released film, A Tale of Love, was screened at the Toronto and Berlin Film festivals in 1996. Although this

list is impressive, Trinh's filmmaking provides challenges to audiences, and it took some time to be initially accepted on the film festival circuit.

When Reassemblage was released, I had to wait a whole year before the film really started circulating and before I got any positive feedback from viewers...I was piling up...rejections from the film festivals and numerous other film programs. In their own words, people 'didn't know what to do with such a film'; it was totally misunderstood" (Framer Framed 130).

Trinh's work is widely recognized and critically acclaimed now that it has been in circulation and viewers are getting used to being invited out of their generic and stylistic comfort zones. In addition to screening her work, Trinh has also appeared at numerous conferences and symposia, continuing her activist work in the areas of Third World feminism, documentary strategies, representation, cultural politics, visual anthropology and multiculturalism.

Independent filmmakers often measure their public success either by screening their films at national and international film festivals or through awarded grants. Based on these parameters, Trinh's work has been successful, although the philosophy behind the work itself suggests that "success" is arbitrary because all images, words, languages and their meanings are, after all, arbitrary. What remains important is getting the film work funded and distributed to the public. Trinh has received numerous grants and fellowships for her work including the Rockefeller Foundation Intercultural Film/Video fellowship, the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Research Fellowship from Cornell

University for Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts Media Arts grant, the National Endowment regional grant, The Pioneer Fund grant, The Film Arts Foundation grant and the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation grant.

Public and critical recognition suggests that Trinh resides on the "inside" of the artistic cinematic canon. However, because her work is difficult to classify into a genre or type, she has not been studied with traditional cinematic critical methods. She is an outsider in narratological inquiry. Using her work to exemplify feminist narrative moves her to that space of marginality -- of an outsider -- within the dominant studies of narrative. To include an experimental documentarian in this study also "breaks" some of the rules of narratology which focus inquiry only on "narrative" film. Documentarians have traditionally been left out of narratological studies, even though they employ the very same techniques as fictional film in constructing their perspective on non-fiction stories. Trinh writes that

Contrary to what many writers on documentary films have said, the striving for verisimilitude and for that 'authentic' contact with 'lived' reality is precisely that which links 'factual' ('direct and concrete' according to another classification) films to studio-made films and blurs their line of distinction. Both types perpetuate the myth of cinematic 'naturalness,' even though one tries its best to imitate life while the other claims to duplicate it" ("Mechanical Eye, Electronic Ear" 59).

So a feminist narratology -- although its goal is to question and challenge traditional formal analysis and modes

of judgement for films by, for and about women -- also constructs a formalism which includes trends, rules, and practices. As Trinh asserts, "'breaking rules', still refers to rules" ("Mechanical Eye, Electronic Ear" 61).

One reason for this study is to question that very centeredness of narrative inquiry. Trinh Minh-ha's filmmaking adds a different dimension to narratological studies by illustrating not only that documentary and experimental-documentary can be studied via a feminist narrative method but that also any kind of critical inquiry is questionable if it asserts itself as a universal standard from which to measure all texts. A feminist narratological reading of both Reassemblage and Surname Viet Given Name Nam expands our understanding of those texts from yet one more perspective. Trinh's filmmaking invites us to understand that there is only inquiry about cinema. Particular answers to theoretical questions are limited by the particular gateways (perspectives) from which you operate -- their language or vocabulary, the questions asked about the text, modes of understanding the text, and meaning(s) the text generates.

Film Notes: Reassemblage

Reassemblage. From silences to silences, the fragile essence of each fragment sparks across the screen, subsides and takes flight. Almost there, half named ("Mechanical Eye, Electronic Ear" 58).

This film is a visual meditation on Senegal, Africa.

People, physical actions, work, community objects, and

living spaces are presented through diverse perspectives. The focus is on location, rather than space, as in Naked Spaces, or voice, as in Surname Viet Given Name Nam. The fragments of women's lives are composed of rapid intercutting of images and sounds showing them at various activities: dancing, weaving, bathing children, tending crops, and preparing food. Trinh states that "what you see in Reassemblage are people's daily activities: nothing out of the ordinary; nothing 'exotic'; and nothing that constitutes the usual focal points of observation for anthropology's fetishistic approach to culture" (Framer Framed 116).

Trinh focuses on domesticity, which has been traditionally relegated to secondary status because it is the space of women. In many ways, this forty minute film outlines the problematics of Trinh's work in cinema to date: its 'subject' is not simply 'women in Senegal' but also the ethnographic method, documentary truth, and the film maker herself. David Sterritt writes that "Reassemblage...is an exercise in avoiding self-centered stances. Near the beginning we hear Trinh saying she wants to speak not 'about' her subject but 'nearby' it" (31). Trinh states that "this negation of certain institutionalized cultural markings is just one way of facing the issues that such markings raise" (Framer Framed 116).

The film challenges the traditional role of Third World women in anthropological discourse (those represented by the presence of outsiders).

A Zen proverb says 'a grain of sand contains all land and sea,' and I think that whether you look at a film, attend a slide show, listen to a lecture, witness the fieldwork by either an expert anthropologist or by any person subjugated to the authority of anthropological discourse, the problems of subject and of power relationship are all there" (Trinh Framer Framed 112).

The film is about women in Senegal as much as the representation of women in Senegal. But there is no singular center or storyline in the film -- an event, person, community location, theme, -- and "there is no single process of centering either" (Framer Framed 116).

The film is a poetic interpretation of Senegal as much as it is about representation of such a place.

On the soundtrack, the filmmaker reflects upon colonialism and tells stories about Westerners in Africa. The film is a challenge and criticism of documentary conventionality -- especially the traditional ethnographic, explorer documentaries that have permeated that film style. That sense of Anglo-Western cultural superiority is thwarted in this film as the audience realizes how much she -- and we -- impose our beliefs on what we see. Through this, Trinh challenges ways of seeing and creating meaning and asks audiences to see differently and to question their own way of knowing their lives, activities, dwelling spaces, reality and truth.

Film Notes: Surname Viet Given Name Nam

This film is a lyrically constructed essay/poem on Vietnamese and Vietnamese-American culture as seen through

the words and voices of women and their experiences with the oppressions of colonialism and post-colonial identity. The film is also about the oral tradition and the feminine condition. The film presents images of women, those promoted by media, history, "official" culture, popular culture, and through other societal institutions. Finally, the film is about cinematic representations, documentary film and objective truth telling. Surname Viet Given Name Nam is a representation about representation.

The premise of this film is a series of interviews, originally recorded in Vietnamese by Mai Thu Van, translated into French, and published in 1983 under the title Viet-nam: un peuple, des voix (Vietnam: One People, Many Voices). Trinh found the book while browsing in a French bookstore and was fascinated as much with the story of the author as the interviewees.

Mai is a second-generation exile, born in New Calidonia, where her mother was sent to work in nickel mines because her village rose up in rebellion against French colonialists. Mai moved to Paris to work and study, then went to Vietnam in 1978 to research Vietnamese women. Trinh notes that "as a Marxist and a strong advocate of socialism, she [Mai] was profoundly wounded by the ideological and emotional trial she underwent not only with the interviews gathered, but also with the publication of the book in Paris" (Framer Framed 177).

The book was met with hostility from both Left and Right political advocates for being too socialist or not

Marxist enough. Most of the women's words refuted the idealized images that had developed of them as heroines of war. Trinh writes that Mai,

being a Marxist...landed in Hanoi with 'a plethora of images of liberated women who have disturbed old concepts to meet socialism,' and her stay there, as she puts it, 'had profoundly shaken [her] preconceived ideas as well as pulverized the stereotypes of [Vietnamese] women made up by the press.' It took her tenacity and an almost morbid care for the truth to wait for the ice to melt, to develop trust in an atmosphere of fear and suspicion, to take the blows, and to accept the eye-opening realities of women who refused to let themselves be mystified as heroines in postrevolutionary times (Framer Framed 144-145).

The search for personal and individual truth(s) among popular, mediated truth(s) inspired Trinh to use the book as a dais from which to explore truth, translation, image, self concept and cinematic truth-telling techniques. Trinh says that "every representation of truth involves elements of fiction, and the difference between so-called documentary and fiction in their depiction of reality is a question of degrees of fictitiousness" (Framer Framed 145). The film is as much about what Vietnamese women think of themselves as how the West has constructed them.

The film begins with an image of a Vietnamese folk dance being performed in San Jose, California, that "evokes the movement of a boat and ends with a small raft in the midst of the sea -- a metaphor that can apply to Vietnamese exiles or to the country itself" (Leventhal 24). Sau-ling Cynthia Wong writes about the politics of mobility in American culture. She asserts that

America was founded on myths of mobility...in the 'crucible of the frontier,' that meeting place of 'savagery and civilization,' a uniquely American 'composite nationality' emerges: 'the immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race' (118).

This, of course, was historically only true for immigrants of European descent. Mobility offered a range of meanings, myths and adventure. American immigrants could not only seek the promise of physical mobility in taking advantage of 'frontier' lands. They also sought the dream of financial, economic and class mobility through the American Dream. "America has customarily defined its uniqueness in terms of the enhanced mobility it can offer: the opportunity to go where one wants, do what one wants, shape life anew" (Wong 119). However, most Asian American immigrants historically did not have the same opportunities or experiences with mobility that Euro-Americans had. Railroad slave labor, Japanese (Asian) internment camps, and Asian immigrant ghetto populations reflect a different standard of mobility for persons who looked different from the assimilation-bound European-American immigrant. Mobility, however, does indeed characterize the Asian immigrant experience. The evacuation of Saigon, the Vietnamese boat-lifts, the illegal stowing of Chinese immigrants on freighters, and the practice of political dissidents fleeing to America illustrate a small fraction of the mobile immigrant experience of Asian Americans. So although mobility is a continuing theme and experience for Asian Americans, they have "been conspicuously absent in existing generalist formulations of

a presumably universally applicable theory of American mobility" (Wong 119). Wong sees this as a difference between mobility for extravagance and mobility as necessity.

One striking difference presents itself upon even the most cursory comparison between mainstream and Asian American discourses on mobility. In the former, horizontal movement across the North American continent regularly connotes independence, freedom, and opportunity for individual actualization and/or societal renewal -- in short, Extravagance. In the latter, however, it is usually associated with subjugation, coercion, impossibility of fulfillment for self or community -- in short, Necessity (Wong 121).

The image of the floating boat returns again at the end of Surname Viet Given Name Nam, framing the narrative and underscoring the continued experiences of many Vietnamese women. Their lives across countries and across generations are lives of mobility, adaptation and necessity.

For the main portion of the film, Trinh uses four of Mai's interviews and reenacts them using Vietnamese-American women. The four "characterizations" translated and performed from the real interviews, conducted by Mai, include a doctor, an embassy maid, a former refugee, and a woman whose husband was imprisoned after the Communist takeover of South Vietnam. They all share in their indoctrination of the "four virtues" and "three submissions" taken from the patriarchal Confucian belief system. ²

The film abruptly shifts near the mid-point. In the second portion of the film, the women who reenact the oral histories then tell their stories about living in America within their hybrid identities. In the second half, two

additional character narrators are added -- Lan Trinh, a young Vietnamese American student, and Sue Whitfield. On the sound track we hear women speaking about their lives in the United States after they "perform" the lives of other Vietnamese women. The film is split into two sections: the reenactments which are acted-narrated in a strained English, followed by the "real" interviews, conducted in English and in Vietnamese. This cleft metaphorically depicts the plight of the Vietnamese woman and her bifurcated identity. The split of the film into two parts or halves also foregrounds the techniques of documentary style and the binarist paradox between truth/reality and no truth/fiction that is inherent in the style.

In the first section, cinematic techniques appear highly structured, unlike the "realism" suggested throughout the second half which is presented in "conventional" or contemporary documentary form. The second half presents more of the conventions of documentary techniques of camera work, editing and interviewing, "as the statements are chopped up, redistributed, and woven in the filmic text with footage of the women's 'real' life-activities" (Framer Framed 146). However, both parts of the film present their own relevant truths. Neither section can be judged as superior to the other. The point, however, is that Trinh invites viewers into a critical viewing space by

Using both reenacted interviews and on-site interviews and by demarcating some of their distinctions (in the duration, mode of address, use of English, camera work), in other words, by presenting them to the

viewers together, what is visibly addressed is the invisibility of the politics of interviews and, more generally, the relations of representation (Framer Framed 146).

The filmmaker constructs a distinct reflexivity by presenting documentary techniques which look at the fictions of their own representations. Stuart Klawans suggests that

These latter segments shift the picture away from the sharply defined 'reality' of documentary into a realm of conflicting emotions, fugitive meanings, obliquely glimpsed characters and situations...the real interviews give rise to fiction, while the fake interviews yield documentary" (The Nation).

Along with the interviews and reenactments, Trinh weaves into her cinematic tapestry poetic images of village life, dancing, archival footage of French Indochina and the American military presence during the war, and superimposed text.

In addition to intradiegetic character narrator voices, we also hear three extradiegetic narrators. They perform (speak or sing) Vietnamese folk poetry and music, recite a famous epic poem about a female warrior, and offer commentary on the use of film as a medium of expression. Trinh serves as one of the commentative, extradiegetic narrators, providing discourse on the process of filmmaking, translation, language and representing women. There is also printed text on the screen which often translates what is being said through voiceover or in Vietnamese. This level of voice is communicated through the visual channels of cinematic narration in addition to the voiced character narration.

A Variety film review suggests that "these lyrics and verse, translated in overtitles, suggests that the subjects' experiences are timeless and representative of their society's as a whole" (Rich).³ This statement suggests that the film speaks for many women in Vietnam and the diaspora. But it is far too sweeping in describing Trinh's work, because the wholeness or generalization of representation is what she partially problematizes through her filmmaking. The multi-layered text constructs a weave of diasporic identities which then may reflect in other exiles' identities. The stories we see and hear are individual stories that do not necessarily become representative of a whole because the women look the same, come from the same country, communicate similar experiences, or experience these stories over time. They do, however, make up a whole because there exist glimpses of recognition about being a woman (an oppressed person) in this narrative weave. The film elicits a shared consciousness through identification. The film holds a redemptive memory for diasporic women and thus recreates history for the purposes of shifting consciousness and being an element of change. Each strand, representing a different woman, comes together to construct a larger understanding of the oppression of colonialism and lack of self-realization by women. As Klawans writes, "Trinh begins to construct a global consciousness based explicitly on the conditions of being an exile, a woman and an inheritor of Vietnamese culture" (The Nation). The first part of the film is about the past, the

exiles. The latter part of the film about the present, the immigrants. These women name themselves, through voice, as a part of Vietnamese and American political, colonial, and immigration history.

Naming and titles are also relevant themes of Surname Viet Given Name Nam. The title is taken from the socialist tradition:

When a man encounters a woman, feels drawn to her, and wants to flirt with her, he teasingly asks: 'young woman, are you married yet?' If the answer is negative, instead of saying no, she will reciprocate, 'Yes, his surname is Viet and his given name is Nam'...one of the recurring motifs of the film is the WEDD-ING, women being married: to a little boy or to a polygamous husband through family arrangements; to the cause, the fatherland, the state; to a foreigner bowing A LA Vietnamese; then to a native man in Western outfit" (Framer Framed 142).

Although Vietnamese women remain oppressed under Communism, they feel a loyalty to their country and consider "themselves eternally married to it, hence the name" (Rich Variety).

Vietnamese names are usually composed of three elements appearing in the following order: first, the family or clan name (Trinh) (Viet). The second, middle name, usually refers to individual's sex. Since 1945, 87% of women's middle names were Thi (Trinh Thi Minh-ha). Before 1945, 100% of Vietnamese woman had Thi as their middle name. The third name is the personal or given name (Minh-ha) (Nam). This corresponds to the first or Christian name in Western culture. ⁴

Surname Viet Given Name Nam presents a complex film

texture with its use of diverse representational elements. It is a composite film, much like Trinh's biographical background. In an interview with Kurt Welff, Trinh said that "film is a medium that allows me to pull together my interest in poetry, visual arts and music. It's not a question of giving one up, but of relating" (Bay Guardian). And Frances Leventhal writes that Trinh provides audiences with no single message or theme in the film; rather she says that she "provides the viewer with many entrances into the film," (24) one with the title; one with the small boat, a visual and evocation of mobility and fluctuation; one with the voices of Vietnamese women whose points of view on the cataclysmic changes of their lives and country have not been presented. "The liberation of Vietnam, Trinh reminds us, was anything but liberating for women who are, whether doctors or wives, habitually forced into infuriating compromises" (Jaehne 68).

The theme of trust also surfaces as an important feminist contextual element in the film. Repeated oppression, whether it be by strict Confucian law, French colonialists, American soldiers, or Vietnamese males leads these women to historically lose trust, even of other women. This film serves as a means to give space to Vietnamese women. It provides spaces, albeit marginal, for their voices to be recorded historically. This serves in illuminating the mistrust among women while they continue on the path of healing those rifts.

In addition to providing a space where women reclaim

vocality, Trinh continues to present voice/writing/language as problematic. She presents the theme of women's voice through multiple narrative voices and the use of language in the film. The multiple voices are disjointed, overlapping, translated, in printed word, song and poetry which are all untraditional filmic representations of cinematic voice. This counters the mainstream practice of identifying synchronous voices as powerful voices. Moreover, the use of multiple voices questions the practice of speaking for, or about, someone else as if they cannot speak for themselves. "From distrust we have come to dialogue" (Framer Framed 52). But Trinh never gives up questioning this dialogue and all dialogues across time. Surname Viet Given Name Nam is a transmission of information through a plurality of cinematic techniques and a community of voices. The images and sounds, as well as "their sources circulate freely in the space of the film and the spectator's imagination" (Rosenbaum 38). Comparing the filmic strategies to music, Jonathan Rosenbaum writes that

It is partially the spectator's process of selection that creates the resulting melodies and harmonies. (Bernice Reynaud has written, 'The purpose of the film...is not to 'give voice' to hitherto silent bodies, but rather to give them full value as musical instruments -- acknowledging their own sound, their density, their fullness, their intrinsic beauty, even when the melody they resonate was written by somebody else.')

(40).

The Conceptual/Collaborative Narrator's Voice

as Focalizer in Reassemblage:

"I do not intend to speak about. Just speak near by."

In Reassemblage, Trinh Minh-ha reads/performs voiceover narration for two reasons. One is to give us a glimpse of tales and stories on Senegal. The other, and more important reason, is to give us commentary on the practices of ethnography and filmmaking. Trinh's voice is the primary narrative voice we hear in the text. We are also presented with other vocal channels: music (Joola drums), natural sounds (hootings, drum beats, cicada, chanting, pestle/motar pounding, laughter) and voices, in the "Sereer language, excerpts of conversations and voice of Djumalog and femme savante of the village of Boucoum" (98). These sounds are also accompanied by silences, which are consciously chosen to capture the spaces between or within the sounds themselves. Silence is an expression of aurality through its presentation of the no-sound experience.

Trinh has spoken about the influence of Zen on her musical composition and filmmaking practices. According to Bernard Glassman, "Zen is a school of Buddhism. Depending on how you define a religion, Buddhism is a religion of awakening...or enlightenment or liberation" (PhenomeNews 3). Zen is one of the many schools of Buddhism. Glassman continues to explain that "Zen as a word literally means meditation. It's a transliteration of a Sanskrit word 'jana,' which became chan in China, Zen in Japan. Literally it's a school that stresses meditation as a form of

awakening" (3). And in that practice of meditation, "the sense of no-self grows...we often feel the flow of phenomena rolls on by itself. No one is doing anything; it all just happens" (Goldstein 118). Joseph Goldstein adds that

We see more deeply the empty, insubstantial nature of phenomena...The moment of opening to the unconditioned, nirvana, confirms most deeply the liberating emptiness of self. In that moment we come to zero...It is no thing, and yet is not nothing. Coming to zero brings us beyond the somethingness of self (118).

Trinh comments that she has admired the Zen-inspired music of John Cage, whose "compositions and readings have effected radical change in all fields of the arts...The fact that Cage brought silence and the sounds of life both into the consecrated realm of concert halls and out onto the domain of public debate, was very liberating" (Framer Framed 121). Because Trinh's films operate much like musical compositions, sound, in this context, is the experience of sound, not a signifier for something else. And so the reflexive use of sound calls attention to the use of sound and our reactions and conditioning to it. She continues that "narrative music is thus exposed in its ideology, its closures and its link with power and knowledge" (121).

The repetitive sounds/no-sounds of Reassemblage come in and out of the film abruptly and are presented in a periodic looping fashion. We move with the rhythms of the film and of women in Senegal. These cinematic narrative devices provide for that rhythm. They also illustrate commentary on the construction of film. So they invite us to experience

the film while at the same time revealing that invitation as construction. Through cinematic narration, we understand how sound is as much a construction in film as visuals are, and how silence calls attention to the space of no-sound, no signifiers in film. Trinh writes that

All the strategies I came up with in Reassemblage were directly generated by the material and the context that define the work. One example is the use of repetition as a transforming, as well as rhythmic and structural, device (114).

Sounds are used as devices of rupture in the continuity of the film and begin to form their own rhythm along with the visuals that appear in a similar repeating mode. The visuals are offered in a splintered style: repetitive images, different camera angles and distances, arrhythmic editing, and portioned compositional presentation. A myriad of diverse images are strung together without any kind of linear progression or cause-effect narrative relationship. The images are elliptical, occurring over time, space and location. Trinh comments that Reassemblage is different than the avant-garde practice of "seeking to transcend representation in favor of visionary presence and spontaneity" (114). Through her techniques she divulges the fragmentation inherent in representation itself, not representation as wholly creative. She writes that

It's not just a technique that one introduces for fragmenting or emphasizing effects. Very often people tend to repeat mechanically three or four times something said on the soundtrack. This technique of looping is also very common in experimental music. But looping is not of any particular interest to me. What interests me is the way certain

rhythms came back to me while I was traveling and filming across Senegal, and how the intonation and inflection of each of the diverse local languages inform me of where I was...so that repetition there is not just automatic reproduction of the same, but rather the production of the same with and in differences" (Framer Framed 114).

Trinh's cinematic visual and auditory practices are focalized through her own personal experiences living in, traveling through, and filming Senegal. The conceptual /collaborative narrator is the narrative focalizer. The "speaking" and "showing" elements of narrative are partnered with each other through the conceptual/collaborative narrator.

By centralizing her voice as commentary and offering to the audience images of Senegal, narration is focalized through Trinh's perspectives of herself as image maker and her place among the history of representations of Africa. "A film about what? my friends ask. A film about Senegal; but what in Senegal?" (Framer Framed 96). Trinh presents two answers to this in Reassemblage. The film presents information about the daily cycle of work, social relations, living spaces, communication, and people, especially women, of particular villages in West Africa. The film is also about Trinh in Senegal. This is supported throughout the film with its use of images that both support and counter what the narration is saying. The relation of visuals to sound appears arbitrary, yet in its fragmentation, it is metaphoric of life's rhythm and discontinuities.

Trinh is also affected by location. In chapter two, I

wrote about Kariamuu Welsh-Asante's seven aspects of African aesthetics. Trinh's rhythmic structure and presentation directly appeals to the senses of polyrhythm, "the simultaneous occurrences of several major rhythms;" dimensionality, "spatial relationships...depth and energy, the awareness of the vital force;" (11-12) and repetition, "the recurring theme in a presentation of art" (Welsh-Asante 11-12, Machiorlatti 111). A feminist narratological perspective recognizes landscape and location as part of the context of the film. Instead of imposing constructions upon the subjects, the filmmaker reads her subjects and constructs images and sounds out of their real lived experiences. The "how" of portraying Senegal is just as relevant as "what" Trinh portrays. This has been ignored by many documentary and ethnographic filmmakers.

The paradox between the how and what of creative, critical and theoretical work shows up in writing as well as filmmaking. Trinh's book Woman, Native, Other was rejected by many publishers for as many reasons. She writes that:

Part of the fight carried on in the book is to show how theory can relate intimately to poetry, how they interact when meaning is prevented from becoming dogma or from ending with what is said, thereby unsettling the identity of the speaking/writing/reading subject in the signifying process. Theorists tend to react strongly against poetry today because for them, poetry is nothing else but a place where subjectivity is consolidated and where language is estheticized (Framer Framed 154).

In development of a feminist aesthetic, the balance between poetry/aesthetics and theory is prevalent. How can

feminists tell stories of women in creative ways, while at the same time critique the ways in which they narrate these tales? The 'what' and the 'how' are inextricably linked in feminist aesthetically driven narratology. Trinh comments that some of the early academic readers of her poetic-theory Woman, Native, Other (submitted as individual articles),

...had a major problem with the Zen materials included, which they considered to be useless in a theoretical context. They reacted most scornfully, focusing on the 'what' and turning a blind eye to the 'how' -- the way the materials are used and the inter-links created [as with the Cixous quotation below] (Framer Framed 141).⁵

The seamless continuity of mainstream filmmaking is a construction that reflects nothing of women's lived experiences and their often cyclical, mundane expressions.

Women, as Cixous defines her, is a whole -- 'whole composed of parts that are wholes' -- through which language is born over and over again. (The One is the All and the All is the One; and yet the One remains the One and the All the All. Not two, not One either. This is what Zen has been repeating for centuries.) (Trinh Woman, Native, Other 38-39.)

Trinh says in voice over "I do not intend to speak about. Just speak nearby." With this introduction the film text presents images which revolve around several themes: living (domestic) space, communal (village) space, land and cultivation, crop/grain preparation, and people (women). The first section of the film focuses mainly on men. After Trinh tells us a tale from Senegalese oral history, the focus is on women and children and their roles in Senegalese culture. The images are not explained by the voice over;

they accompany it or reside along side it. Visual images are more prevalent, however, than sound. Trinh's voiceover is used intermittently as commentary, or to offer parallel or analogous information. And other sounds are used in the same rhythmic manner.

There is a piece of Senegalese history that Trinh narrates in several segments through Reassemblage. This narration centralizes women and their daily activities in the film. Trinh recounts that:

In numerous tales
 Woman is depicted as the one who possessed
 the fire
 Only she knew how to make fire
 She kept it in diverse places
 At the end of the stick she used to dig the
 ground with, for example
 In her nails or in her fingers (Framer Framed
 96).

She kept it in diverse places
 At the end of the stick she used to dig the
 ground with, for example (96).

The first time this has been introduced into
 the village
 Woman is depicted as the one who possessed
 the fire.
 Only she knew how to make fire
 What can we expect from ethnology? (98)

Fire place and woman's face
 The pot is known as a universal symbol for
 the mother, the GrandMother, the Goddess

Nudity does not reveal
 The hidden
 It is its absence (101)

What I see is like looking at me
 I am looking through a circle in a circle of
 looks (105).

This is one of the few strands of story material that we can locate in the narration of Reassemblage which provides

commentary about Senegal, and not necessarily about Trinh as filmmaker or Trinh as ethnographer. The other single-sentence snippets of narration that tell "stories" are about a peace-corps volunteer, an ethnologist and his gynecologist wife. These all indicate a political commentary on studying, observing and teaching in Africa -- speaking about, or for, rather than within a culture. It is clear that most of the narration is about Trinh as observer among other observers throughout history. This illustrates the political aspect of feminist narrative: its performance of commentary, questioning dominant systems of knowledge and inquiry, and self reflexivity of representation. Feminist narrative also illustrates the necessary removal of one's self from dominant systems when not of the dominant group.

The embedded narration about women as possessors of fire illustrates how feminist narration can also be reflected in theme and content. When the voiceover begins to tell the tale of women and fire, the visual cinematic narration shifts to portraying women and children. The images of women's bodies, women and children interacting, the pounding of grain, food preparation, and village dwellings/community space are the images that continue to be presented to viewers. These images are presented so as to disrupt seamless editing, continuity and the invisible flow that is present in mainstream film styles. Images are disjointedly linked, as much as a women's daily work is disjointed, shifting between child care, food preparation, relating to other women, bathing, washing clothes and moving

in and out of one's domestic and public space. Trinh does not "try to choose a view of the subject; [she explores] various ways of seeing it" (Framer Framed 115). The images are focalized as if to recall women's daily activities. We are presented with glimpses of daily life in Senegal without the accompanying voice over explanations of traditional ethnographic films -- "And now the women of the village prepare the corn". There is no linearity in the presentation of images because women's lives in Senegal are not linear, they are rather cyclical and elliptical-- bathing, feeding, food prep, planting, harvesting.

The presentation of landscapes also links land, women and their work.

'Women must write through their bodies. Must not let themselves be driven away from their bodies...closure and openness, again, are one ongoing process: we do not have bodies, we are our bodies, and we are ourselves while being the world (Trinh Woman, Native, Other 37).

In Reassemblage, women's bodies are of the landscape as much as the fields of crops and endless horizon of Senegal.

In addition to a cinematic narration that presents images that counteract the traditional style of the ethnographic documentary, new ways of visioning women in relation to their bodies and cycles of daily activity are presented. And, new ways of chronicling women as part of their landscape, history and memory are offered.

The focus on women's bodies directly addresses the practices of ethnography and perceptions of nudity. Trinh focuses on women's bodies in a variety of shot distances,

angles, and framing. Babies breast feed in close up, women's breast nipples take up the entire film frame, and women go about their daily work with bare breasts, sometimes captured by the camera and sometimes not. The body is counter-fetishized by a cinematic narration that presents the body in its full form, in full screen. Often the duration of these individual shots underscores the image itself. We linger on women's bodies. This body meditation counters mainstream filmmaking practices of "peeping/looking" which only present glimpses of bare breasts for the fetish-driven and desiring mind.

According to feminist film scholars, the apparatus of cinema has served to fetishize or spectacle the human form, particularly the female form. The body has been "captured" and "mutilated" through Western representation much like the land has been cleared, stripped and industrialized in developing societies. "Woman is depicted as the one who possessed the fire" comes on the sound track as we see visuals of burning bush and trees. Trinh recognizes this fetishization and literally puts it in our faces to call attention to it. In Reassemblage, the body is as much a part of daily life and cyclicity as the pounding of grain. Landscapes, villages, and women's bodies are focalized through the conceptual narrator. Women are portrayed as life givers and sustainers as the land around them is changed by fire. The circle of life, death and transformation relates to the cycle of life, portrayal and representation. And women are also focalized with an

awareness of how their bodies have been represented through mediated channels.

A feminist narrative analysis of Reassemblage illustrates how film can be both externally and internally focalized by the conceptual/collaborative narrator. The narrator comments within the film as part of the diegesis, simultaneously as she comments on herself as the creatrix of the modes of cinematic narration.

Reflexive Cinematic Narration in Hybrid-Boundary Cinema

Cinematic narration in Reassemblage illustrates itself to be highly reflexive and constructed, so it creates new boundaries for itself within narrative analysis. The photography style is conscious of its portrayal of women, specifically their work and relations to that work through the body. There are low angle shots of women with bare breasts, close ups of their breasts as children suckle from them, and long shots of the landscape that they inhabit with them in it. The editing style is elliptical with frequent use of jump cuts and repetitions. Trinh writes that

The limits of the looker and of the camera are clearly exposed, not only through the repeated inclusion of a plurality of shots of the same subject from very slightly different distances or angles...but also through a visibly hesitant...an incomplete, sudden and unstable camera work (Framer Framed 115).

These visuals work along with the voiceover track and music, which are also elliptical and fragmented as they move in and abruptly out. Trinh says that this results "as a form of reflexive body writing" (Framer Framed 115). The rhythms of

life in Africa are presented as rhythms of visual and aural material. Trinh establishes relationships of the Senegalese environment through arrhythmic and fragmented visuals paralleled with aural juxtaposition of looping sounds and silences. Sounds do not accompany visuals as supportive materials, rather they inspire their own interpretation of African life and landscape. The voices are taken away from the body images and looped through them. So the rhythms of life for women -- pounding grain, singing, laughing, sorting kernels in bowls -- become the rhythm of the film. Trinh calls this the "music of labor...the body rhythm of collective work. In the film, the way women bodily relate to each other while working is very rhythmic and musical...daily interactions among people are music" (Framer Framed 125).

Cinematic narration is reflexive in that the film does not present story information "about", but rather "of" the land, people and their work. It is an experiential film rather than a didactic one. Yet the narration is always conscious of the multiple perspectives of/about how to represent Senegal. The film's cinematic narration is also focalized through an African aesthetic with several of the qualities noted by Welsh-Asante.

Space is communal in Reassemblage as Trinh photographs dwellings, huts and common areas that the villagers inhabit. She invites viewers to inhabit these spaces, as well as witness how they are different, or separate, from the spaces of Africa that have been constructed in other films. There

is no real stability or coherence of the image presented through continuity editing. This forces the spectator to consider difference, otherness and apartness rather than unconsciously engage with the text. The film style disturbs clarity of story by reflecting on the arbitrariness of images and relationships among and between those images. We see the women who inhabit these spaces, but we are kept at a distance. There is no linearity to get involved in, nor is there a clear invitation to enter this film world through emotional desire or attachment. We do not become a part of the film world, become apart from it -- we are outside witnesses around it. Buddhist writer and teacher Joseph Goldstein writes that from the "understanding of selflessness comes a deep connection with everything. We need not rely on certain forms of relationships to feel connectedness, because there is no longer separation. There is no one to be separate" (118). The emotional closeness to the characters and their experiences comes only in our surrender to the rhythms of the film, to the experiences of women across culture, and to what Trinh calls "the non-verbal dimension of film, which includes the silences, the music, and the environmental sound as well" (Framer Framed 163).

Trinh calls on the metaphor of the bowl in this film as the container of life. "The pot is known as a universal symbol for the Mother, the Grandmother, the Goddess" (Framer Framed 101). Bowls, baskets and pots are prevalent in the final portion of Reassemblage and reflect the state of women

as containers of life, food and lineage. "Creativity and objectivity seem to run into conflict. The eager observer collects samples and has not time to reflect upon the media used," says Trinh in voice over. She speaks of herself as collector of story material. She also refers to women's history and the subsequent presentation of that to audiences through film. Film is the container of women's stories, but the stories have been told in ways that have ignored women's real experiences of the life cycle. Trinh reflects on the film medium as the container, like the bowl, that holds that space of and for identity. "I am looking through a circle in a circle of looks," she says off camera. "Just speak nearby." This statement, that I use several times in this chapter, reflects the situations of women who speak nearby the official patriarchal explanations of their experiences -- those by anthropologists, psychologists, or filmmakers. Trinh comments that "who is looking at whom and from what place the look is offered -- all this keeps on shifting" (Framer Framed 163).

The stories we get of women's history and their experiences are just glimpses on a circle, both inside and outside of other circles -- those constructed throughout "official" history and those questioning that history by activist filmmakers. Trinh writes of the reflexive rhythms of Reassemblage which counteract the colonialist understanding of realistic, predictable and explainable representations of people's lives.

Daily interactions among people are

music...the relation between and within the visuals is also rhythmically determined. The way an old woman spins cotton; the way a daughter and her mother move in syncopation while they pound or beat the grain together; the way a group of women chant and dance while plastering the floor of the front court in a house; or the way the different cultures counteract or harmonize with one another; these are everyday rhythms and music of life. In such an environment one realizes how much modern society is based on compartmentalization -- the mentality colonialism has brought with its spread (Framer Framed 127).

In Reassemblage, Trinh Minh-ha presents viewers with a narratorial style which feministically orients itself around women as central characters. Women are symbols of dominant culture's representation of otherness. Women are the rhythms of daily life, but their historical representations were often altered and linearized through mainstream narrative construction. Women have historically been "othered" in mainstream visual communication. Trinh writes that she makes

A distinction between an alienating notion of otherness (the Other of man, the Other of the West) and an empowering notion of difference. As long as difference is not given to us, the coast is clear. We should be the ones to define this difference (Framer Framed 186).

Women are containers for stories, as film is a container for the presentation of women's history. Trinh's overtly feminist narrative style is aurally and visually reflexive and personally focalized.

In Reassemblage, cinematic narration serves the purpose of critiquing dominant forms of representation and knowledge access, while presenting narrative as experiential.

Cinematic narration serves a larger political and cultural purpose, rather than being a vehicle to present story material or recount narrative events in a creative and entertaining way. Reassemblage also illustrates that the conceptual/ collaborative narrator can be present as on-screen, intradiegetic commentator and off-screen, extradiegetic focalizer. And through feminist narrative analysis, we see that Trinh centralizes the concept of feminism in her writings and films as she places women's voices, bodies and stories in particular historical milieu. She includes herself in this particular rewriting and redefinition of history.

All definitions are devices. This is one way of summarizing how feminism could be understood and practiced...In a way, feminism always has at least two gestures at the same time: that of pointing insistently to difference, and that of unsettling every definition of woman arrived at. As a Zen saying goes, 'Never take the finger pointing to the moon for the moon itself.' (Framer Framed 186).

Trinh seems to want to show both the moon and the finger which refers to the moon. Trinh's 1989 film, Surname Viet Given Name Nam, provides an excellent example of how narratological voice relates a feministically oriented narrative and how language and women's experiences are translated through film narration.

Voice and Translation in Surname Viet Given Name Nam
Surname Viet Given Name Nam provides a complex textual weave of voices and narratological tactics. The film has been

called a documentary, an experimental documentary, even a personal film. Despite the inability to categorize or name this film, it illustrates how Trinh's films continue to be reflexive without requiring explicit explanation and/or definition. Bill Nichols situates Surname Viet in the interactive mode of documentary address. In this mode of address, the filmmaker intervenes and interacts to question or make visible the veil of illusion. According to Nichols,

The interactive documentary stresses images of testimony or verbal exchange and images of demonstration (images that demonstrate the validity, or possibility, the doubtfulness, of what witnesses state)...The mode introduces a sense of partialness, of *situated* presence and *local* knowledge that derives from the actual encounter of filmmaker and other" (Representing Reality 44).

This relates to the concept of, and problems with, translation -- translating language, history, culture. Is translation really accurate and does it present a realism that speaks to everyone? Does any realism speak to everyone? There are realism(s) which reflect localized or webbed knowledges which emanate from individuals (subjects) and their interactions with other individuals (filmmakers). Among the counternarrative, interactive techniques that Nichols identifies: narrative intransitivity, estrangement, negative space, foregrounding, multiple diegesis, aperture, and unpleasure, he asserts that:

The narrative frustrations built into Surname Viet Given Name Nam, for example, do not seek to displease for the sake of displeasing ...Instead they guide the viewer toward another level of reading and problematic that would otherwise have been relegated to the

background (Representing Reality 258).

An important theme which runs throughout this film is the concept of translation. Translation is an interactive mode of dialogue between the cinematic narrator and audience, narrative voice and audience or the conceptual/collaborative narrator and audience. The illusory nature of narrative's portrayal of myth, history and ideology are called into question and made visible in text-meaning-audience dialogues.

Amy Lawrence suggests that Surname Viet addresses "what it means to speak as a woman, an historical experience that is lived through the body and which is at the same time a culturally constructed position. Even within a traditional culture, however, woman's identity is not fixed but fluid" (Carson et al. 412). So speaking as a women situates this film within the parameters of a feministically oriented narrative and opens up the understanding of feminist aesthetics as an interactive and mobile phenomena. The experience of exile is a multiple voiced experience. Women have been exiled in numerous ways.

The narratological levels of voice presented in the film are complex. The voicing of the text went through several stages and involves several different kinds of narrators. As stated earlier, Trinh found the original text of interviews done by Mai Thu Van (who translated them from Vietnamese into French). Trinh then selected several of these and translated portions of them from French into English for the film. Translation involves several degrees

of separation between each rendering. Vietnamese-American women acted out the stories of these women. The process of selecting and scripting the story material for the first four character narrators involves several stages of translation. In addition, the four women represent themselves in the second half of the film, which adds an additional four character narrators who reveal more story/text material. Trinh notes

All interviews conducted in Vietnam (here with Ly, Thu Van, Cat Tien and Anh) are excerpted and translated...These interviews are reenacted in the film, with: Tran Thi Hien, both as Ly (her role) and as Hien (her real voice); Khien Lai as Thu Van and as Khien; Ngo Kim Nhuy as Cat Tien and as Kim; Tran Thi Bich Yen as Anh and as Yen. (Framer Framed 50).

Lan Trinh and Sue Whitfield are featured as Lan and Sue in the second half of the film as well, adding yet two more character narrators. The ten character narrators are presented to audiences as translated, constructed, acted and real narrators throughout the course of the film. In addition to these ten intradiegetic character narrators, there are two extradiegetic voiceover narrators. As in Reassemblage, Trinh assumes the one voiceover that comments on the process of representation, translation, and voicing history through the film medium. There is a third extradiegetic voice which sings songs and voices proverbs, sayings and poetry in Vietnamese.

There is indeed a community of women's voices, intradiegetically and extradiegetically, which tells the stories of life in Vietnam and as Vietnamese-Americans. In

chapter three, I presented Lanser's arguments for the category of communal voice which is "invested in a definable community and textually inscribed...through multiple, mutually authorizing voices" (Fictions of Authority 21). The communal voice moves us away from individualized, single protagonist stories and into heterosocial relationships and narratives. A female oriented community and consciousness results from this focus on heterosocial connection. The communal voice recognizes not only women's consciousness however, it also centralizes a feminist ideology and cultural perspective. This voice recreates history from the matriarchal perspective and is an element of change in how audiences read texts.

Lanser also asserts the importance of polyphony -- the multiplicity of sounds -- that comes with multiple narrators. Polyphony also refers to a phenomena in music whereby a number of individual, but harmonizing melodies, are combined. Trinh's film offers a musical echo of women's voices to expand our consciousness of the female experience and to call our attention to how film has created single, male-dominated subjectivity.

In addition to actual voices which communicate the "telling" angle of narratological material, printed words also fall under the category of narrative voice. Throughout the film, words appear on the screen in English. Often these words serve a translation function, subtitling the spoken Vietnamese words. They also serve a commentative function when they relate poetry, song and folklore. The

plight of women is communicated on a variety of levels. As this short segment is sung in Vietnamese, printed text translates it for audiences:

Unstable like a hat without a chin-strap.
Like a boat without a rudder, as she is
without a husband. She who is married wears
a yoke on her neck, But she who has no
husband is like a bed whose nails have come
loose...There is never enough water to fill
the river. There is never enough women to
please a young man" (Framer Framed 67).

Text can also foreshadow something about to visually happen or be verbally portrayed in the film. In the first part of the film, the words appear against a dark background and we anticipate the matching verbal performance to follow. The words appear in various places on the screen, often taking up one-half of the frame while the woman (subject) on the screen occupies the other half. Later in the film, superimposed text is placed over the subject image.

Lawrence asserts that

The viewer's relationship to the film becomes fragmented between image, graphics, and sound track. We can choose to listen, to read quickly and then listen, to read as we hear, or to use the written words as backup when the spoken words become difficult to understand (Carson et al. 414).

The print material serves as a mechanism of double voicing. What is being presented, via titles, also appears in conjunction with spoken word. Trinh comments that

...difference is also perceived in the fact that not only does the text not always enter at the same time as the speech, its shorter duration on the screen also makes it quasi-impossible for the viewer to hear and read at the same time without missing parts of both. The tension that the viewer experiences in trying to synchronize the two activities is,

at another level, also the tension that the women experienced in reenacting a speech that has been transcribed and translated (Framer Framed 208).

We hear English and we read what the woman on screen is saying. As Anh says the following, it is also printed on the screen:

My sister sat still. She was staring at me as if I came from another planet. I could see a glimmer of revolt in her eyes. Suddenly her cold, grave voice told me: 'You, my little sister...the socialist doctor!..' She stood up from her chair, took my hand and led me to a mirror: 'Look at yourself at least once!' I had not, indeed, looked at myself in a mirror for four years, and I saw an old, worn out woman...I gazed at my [own image] with sustained attention and realized I wore the same clothes, the same wooden shoes for as long as I could remember. I didn't think another world existed. I was stirred to the depth of my soul by a mad anguish and my mind became confused. I became aware of my own existence... (Framer Framed 70).

As we hear the woman speak these words and read the text simultaneously, we witness her becoming aware of herself and owning her own existence as a woman. We are made doubly aware of her condition, but are distanced from it by means of cinematic narrational devices of rupture -- both the text and cinematic narratorial techniques of framing and camera movement.

Lawrence suggests that Trinh uses this to "foreground the distance between the women and English" (Carson et al. 414). The printed text is "like a barrier in scenes throughout the first half of the film...the double presentation of English, however, insists on the difference between spoken language and written" (414). The

extradiegetic narrative that is voiced by Trinh comments on the act of translation after Thu Van says "I am caught between two worlds." (Trinh): "I would have to affirm this uncertainty: is a translated interview a written or spoken object? Interview: antiquated device of documentary. Truth is selected, renewed, displaced and speech is always tactical" (Framer Framed 73). Foreshadowing that the "real" women actresses, who have been portraying the Vietnamese women on the screen, are about to be revealed at the film's midpoint, Trinh comments:

Spoken, transcribed and translated
 From listening to recording; speech to
 writing
 You can talk, we can cut, trim, tidy up
 The game often demands a response to the
 content, rarely to the way that content is
 framed.
 Spoken and read.
 Between a language of inwardness and that of
 pure surface (Framer Framed 78).

In voice over, Trinh also comments on the content of what women say in their interviews.

The notorious double day flashes back in my memory: women work as a full unit of economic production and do all the unpaid housework and child care. Popular sayings qualify the three steps of her life and her victimization as that of a lady before marriage, that of a maid during marriage, and that of a monkey long after marriage" (Framer Framed 72).

The use of English as the "voice" of the Vietnamese women is a deliberate choice to invoke viewers to hear, see and listen to women's stories, the "official" history of Vietnamese women has been previously constructed for them. The English language itself is symbolic of a universal colonizer. Lawrence suggests that a "reason the women do

not speak Vietnamese is because for them, as for the film, there is no 'Vietnam'" (Carson et al. 413) but rather a series of colonized, Confucianized and fractured nationalities. "Under the Communist government, silence becomes these women's strategy of resistance" (Lawrence rpt. in Carson et al. 413). The character narrators speak a hesitant English when they reenact the interviews of the Vietnamese women. However, when they are in America portraying "themselves" in the second half of the film, and where the Vietnamese women appear more "real" or more "themselves," they primarily speak Vietnamese. Lawrence suggests that

The use of English in the film emerges as multiply determined. It suggests first a conscious address to an English-speaking audience; resistance to the official government line epitomized by the government's language; a consciously political alienation from their 'own' country and culture" (Carson et al. 413)

This multiple voicing is both act of cultural solidarity and resistance to the master language, although that language is mobile and subjective itself. While acting out roles of Vietnamese women, the women speak English, a language resistant to the master language. While being interviewed by Trinh in America, the women speak Vietnamese, the language of unassimilated immigrants. In both instances, they speak a language that counteracts the official language of their location. Yet the women also seem to be without their own language of expression because they are also without a location. The experience of the immigrant is a

mobile experience of necessity.

Narratological voice and image are disembodied throughout Surname Viet Given Name Nam. Women are both attached and removed from their own voices and bodies. Thus synchronization and asynchronization are brought into question in filmmaking practices. In traditional feminist studies, the disembodied woman (through voice) was thought to be more powerful because she disrupted the synchronicity of the male order and male dominated classical film structure. She disrupted the "look" or "gaze" of the cinematic apparatus. Moreover, giving women "voice" has been a project for feminist filmmakers. One way this is done is by rupturing the seamless structure of classical film styles. Another way is to recognize women as central characters. Yet Trinh questions the notion whether synchronicity or asynchronicity is better than the other. Both are constructions of identity and subjectivity in different ways. Lawrence suggests that the film "puts into question the 'unity, coherence' and 'presence' assumed of a synchronized image and voice as well as the unity, coherence and presence of a stable viewing subject" (Carson et al. 408). The character narrators of the film shift identities, languages, and locales and the voiceover narrators offer us numerous perspectives on Vietnamese culture, women, voice, filmmaking and representation. So the film offers perspectives of multiple and mobile speakers.

Thus my films have no single message, no wrapped-up package to offer to the viewer (hence also, as I mentioned earlier, the

difficulty of saying what the films are really about). The messages foregrounded are necessarily plural as the film/filmmaker looks critically at itself/herself unfolding before the viewers. Being truthful to oneself and to one's making is... 'being in the in-between of all definitions of truth.' (Framer Framed 186).

Conceptual/Collaborative Narrative Voice:

The Documentarian and Her Subjects Construct Reality

The levels of narratological voice in Surname Viet Given Name Nam are immense. In addition to translation, disembodiment of voice and image, and multiple perspectives, narrative voice is commentative and women's culture is contextually communicated.

The feministically orientated narratological voice in this film is communal and commentative. Voice is not only heard through Trinh Minh-ha the filmmaker, but voice is also focalized through the conceptual/collaborative narrational aspect. The voices Trinh 'heard' when she read the original text and chose them to be represented in the film are an element of conceptual/collaborative narration because they are a part of its contextual origin. The women whose voices and bodies reenact the original Vietnamese interviews collaborate with Trinh in the narratological retelling of stories of women. They are also conceptual/collaborative narrators. In casting the roles Trinh says that

It was important for me to hear about their own life stories before I decided on the voices that they would be incorporating. Within the range of their personal experiences, which were sometimes worse than those they were reenacting, they could drift in and out of their roles without too much

pain. But in selecting them for who they are rather than simply for who they play, I was not so much looking for authenticity as I was interested in seeing how they would draw the line between the differing fictions of living and acting (Framer Framed 194).

These layers of voicing women's stories, concerns, fears, hopes and dreams all collectively communicate the experiences of being a woman situated somewhere in a history that has been previous constructed for them. The women had active roles in how their constructions would look. And not all women are conscious of their own constructions. "To a certain extent, interviewees choose how they want to be represented in what they say as well as in the way they speak, dress, and perform their daily activities," (Framer Framed 194). The truth of authenticity became something that the director had to face in her own questioning of representation.

In the reenacted interviews, we...were partly going after the feminist 'natural look,' thus, the women involved are clad in very simple clothing, which is what they would wear in socialist Viet Nam. But in the 'real life' shooting situations where they had a choice, they would all prefer to wear make up and to dress up with showy colors. For the...Western viewer, this has been misleading in terms of class...So while I was trying to be 'truthful' and to hang on to some vestiges of documentary practice in my choices as director, the women were in fact, opening it up by insisting on what, in certain cases, is an imaginative flight from their working class daily realities (Trinh Framer Framed 194-195).

Which comes closer to documentary: the reenactment or the real interviews of the women playing themselves? Both are rewoven constructions of reality. Lawrence suggests

that this film "initiates a dialogue with its audience" (Carson et al. 409) as it directly addresses gender, voice, colonialism, translation, representation and historical record. This is best seen in two respects: the comments on filmmaking by Trinh, as extradiegetic narrator, and the comments by the women about "playing" roles in the film, which both occur in the second half of the film.

The second half of the film reveals even more of its own awareness and criticism of itself as a film. Although when we watch the first half of the film we begin to question its stylistic lighting, conscious camera work, and carefully choreographed character movement and action, we do not know the "real" truth of the film until the women begin to portray themselves and comment on their own constructed interpretations. Kim (who portrays Cat Tien) says on camera:

A friend of mine opened her eyes wide when she heard I was going to be on film: 'You've never been an actress, how can you fake it?' Another friend of my husband teased me, 'They know you can act, so they have selected the right person. Who knows. Maybe you'll act so well that the Americans will notice you and you'll be a Hollywood star in the future (Framer Framed 86).

After Kim says this, Trinh comments in voice over, "One thing the man said he learned to let go of while in prison, is identity: this singular naming of a person, a race, a culture, a nation." The commentative narrator reflects upon the women's contemplation of portraying someone else. We then hear a different female voiceover who talks about the Vietnamese adjusting to their new lives: "mastering

elevators and escalators, learning wristwatch-type punctuality, taming vending machines, distinguishing dog's canned food from human canned foods..." (Framer Framed 86). Identity is continually learned and relearned by women. They are mobile out of necessity. Both intradiegetic and extradiegetic narrators provide commentative voices on the making of the film as well as on the roles, experiences and community of Vietnamese-American women.

Yen, who portrays a 60 year old Vietnamese Doctor named Anh, comments on her role in Vietnamese.

When I accepted to help in this film, it was because its subject, as you told me, concerned Vietnamese women. Since I have always praised their ability to sacrifice and to endure, I thought this was an opportunity to speak out, although I was going through a lot of pressure and difficulties at the time. Once I worked on my part, I wanted to give my best because I don't think it is an individual matter but one that concerns a whole community.

While these women are participating as acts of empowerment for themselves and other Vietnamese women, Trinh question the tactics she herself employs. "Which truth does one want to offer the viewer," she asks (Framer Framed 145). She considers the interview to be a "shallow set up" and "the director must then 'work on' this shallowness, that is, deliberately acknowledge it in order to further the film's inquiries...the making of Surname Viet allows the practice of interviews to enter into the play of the true and the false, the real and the staged" (145).

The Narrative Construction of Truth Telling:

The Documentary Interview

The on-camera interview is a narrative construction of truth telling. Trinh says in voiceover, "and I would like to affirm this uncertainty: is a translated interview a written or spoken object?" In many documentary films, the interview is the primary channel through which aural story information is conveyed. Interview subjects are the "voices" of reality or "witnesses" to the real world. However, interviews can be staged, recorded, edited, rearranged and made invisible for the purposes of presenting the argument and angle of the filmmaker, or for rendering the filmmaker invisible. By rendering themselves invisible in the text, filmmakers often feel they present an objective world view. The subjects appear as if to speak for themselves. But they are focalized through the processes of production and postproduction. Network and local newscasts are examples of this style of sound bite news, whereby on-camera reporters rely on witnesses (MOS "Man on Street" interviews) for credibility when compiling their stories and narrative interpretations.

The tactic of using interviews presents assembled and often fabricated truths as Truth. The expository mode of address noted by Nichols "emphasizes the impression of objectivity and of well-substantiated judgement" (Representing Reality 35). Scripting and "editing in the expository mode generally serves to establish and maintain rhetorical continuity more than spatial or temporal

continuity" (Nichols 35). In this mode of address, the subjects speak about their social conditions, and the narrator(s) further interprets and explains that condition.

The observational mode of documentary address relies on editing "to enhance the impression of lived or real time" (Nichols 38) and emphasizes objectivity or nonintervention by the filmmaker. This mode of address is about the filmmaker being in the right place at the right time and capturing "real" lived events on camera. The point of view of the narrative develops in postproduction when the editor compresses several days of events into one hour of film time, seamlessly portraying an event as if experienced in real time. There is an absence of commentary, filmmaker involvement and use of images that suggest generalizations.

The Direct Cinema and Cinema Verite movements of the late 1950s and 1960s are exemplary of observational documentary. In homage to documentarian Dziga Vertov, whose film legacy was the pursuit of "truth" through the camera lens, film makers "called their technique cinema verite -- translated from kino-pravda, film-truth" (Barnouw 254). However, Barnouw notes the difference between these two truth-telling film styles.

The direct cinema documentarist took his camera to a situation of tension and waited hopefully for a crisis; the [Jean] Rouch version of cinema verite tried to precipitate one. The direct cinema artist aspired to invisibility; the Rouch cinema verite artist was often an avowed participant. The direct cinema artist played the role of uninvolved bystander; the cinema verite artist espoused that of provocateur" (254-255).

As documentary aesthetics shifted over time and through necessity, more interaction between filmmaker and social film subject stressed "images of testimony or verbal exchange and images of demonstration" and centralized the interview as truth teller or truth revealer. This interaction often revolved around the use of interviews to communicate the story material. Interviews, albeit appearing real in representation, are edited, cut, reedited, rearranged and manipulated. Participants from the social world spoke directly to audiences, via the mediating camera operator, director or editor. The director served as a catalyst for truth and reality, while the witnesses to social conditions were the voices of authority.

The technique of the documentary interview comes under attack in Trinh Minh-ha's films. She illustrates that filmmakers find other ways to interact with viewers, rather than through on-camera exchange with social-film subjects. Unusual framing, shot composition, editing, juxtapositions or "the emphasis given to the 'empty space' between filmmaker and subject in Trinh Minh-ha's Surname Viet Given Name Nam, put the solemnity and authority of the interview itself into question" (Nichols Representing Reality 45).

The notion of negative or empty space is an articulation of conceptual/collaborative narration that manifests itself through cinematic narration. This connects to Trinh's Zen influence in her filmmaking and writing.

Speaking...of classifications and borders,
you are either 'holistic' or 'analytical,'
but you can't possibly be both, because the

two are made into absolute antithetical stances. Zen has the gift to frustrate and infuriate the rational mind, which hurriedly dismisses it as simply one more form of mystification. So Zen's tenets are a real problem for a number of academics; but I myself do not operate within such divisions, and I don't see why I have to be bound to them. Spirituality cannot be reified. It's difficult to talk about it, not only because it escapes the principles of logic but also because 'spiritual' itself is an impossible term: disinherited and vacated in this society of reification, hence not easy to use without exacting negotiations (Framer Framed 141).

Empty space is that area within the frame that has previously has no definition, or at least signification. So when Trinh moves her camera around her subject, lingering on the face, panning down to her hands, then to screen right or left, then back up to her face, she creates an awareness of the object-relation in cinema. Empty space is the focus of the moving camera. She says that in her films there is an awareness of "the 'object-oriented camera' - a camera that focuses only on catching the object and is eager to objectify," because through cinematic narration, our sense of space and focus are altered (Framer Framed 141). The shooting style of first half of Surname Viet Given Name Nam brings your awareness of the camera's orientation, not on subjects or objects, but rather on "the space that makes both composition and framing possible, that characterizes the way an image breathes (Framer Framed 142).

To see negative space as intensely as the figure and the field, instead of subjecting it to the latter in cinematography, mise-en-scene, and narrativity, implies a whole different way of looking at and of relating to things. This is not far from the notion

of the Void in Asian philosophies. People often don't even know what you are talking about when you mention the vitality of the Void in the relationships between object and non-object, or between I and non-I...they may think it's a form of mystification. This is a problem with reifying, binarist thinking: emptiness here is not merely opposed to fullness or objecthood; it is the very site that makes forms and contents possible -- that is, also inseparable (Framer Framed 142).

The filmmaker asserts herself into the film, not as a participant, but rather as a disruptive and contemplative collaborator through which cinematic narration takes place. This ruptures the audience's feeling of "the real" of the interactive mode of documentary address. In this mode of reflexive interaction, the filmmaker reassumes the voice of authority as she illustrates the constructions of witnessing reality and presenting that to viewers.

Cinematic narration in the film offers moments of "interstitial space" or interval space, where the rules, styles and practices of documentary film refuse to occupy themselves within a category or classification. "You are working in this precarious space where you constantly run the risk of falling on one side or the other" (Trinh Framer Framed 173). Trinh occupies the space between documentary "real" truth and fictionalized truth by calling attention to both and occupying both simultaneously. Historical notions of documentary truth assume that a real truth does exist. The rules of fiction and the rules of documentary collapse in her work, as they do in all works which employ narrative techniques to communicate story material.

You are walking right on the edge and challenging both sides so that they cannot simply be collapsed into one. This is the space in between, the interval to which established rules of boundaries never quite apply" (Trinh Framer Framed 173-174).

The use of interviews has been done on many levels and for as many purposes in documentary film. It is a technique used by character narrators in fictional film as well, often to relate story material of the diegesis which "appears" to mimic the news/documentary style of realism. The line between truth and fiction is only one of perspective and presentation. Documentary reenacts or 'fictionalizes' events from the real world to stylistically portray social events in all their 'realism' to viewers. The choice of staging the interviews in Surname Viet Given Name Nam, comments Trinh

Is used precisely for the part that usually people would not think of reenacting, which is interviews. It is used to deal with the notion of inter-viewing itself and with the interview as a cinematic frame, thereby refusing to reduce its role to that of a mere device to authenticate the message advanced...the more one abides by the norm of having story and action as 'remedy' to the common prose of life -- or to one's own dullness -- the more one contributes to the denigration of what Hollywood calls 'issue films,' hence to the limitation of film language in general (Framer Framed 164).

Trinh uses reenactments of real interviews as well as the so-called real interviews of the actresses for the purposes of commenting on the practice of truth telling and truth revealing. She also questions the tactic of the interview in this process. By having both the staged and real interviews, Trinh also emphasizes that truth/reality and

fiction are the two sides of a single coin. "By having the staged and the real together, what is brought out is the element of fiction in representation -- the fictions of film caught in the fictions of life" (Framer Framed 165). Trinh comments in voiceover as we shift from the staged interviews to the real ones: "Interview: an antiquated device of documentary. Truth is selected, renewed, displaced and speech is always tactical" (Framer Framed 73).

By employing both staged and real interviews Trinh provides viewers with multiple gateways from which to enter the film. Both kinds of 'interviews' call attention to the process of interviewing, illuminate the 'politics' of the interview in the gathering of truth, and question translation of that truth to visual and aural form. The film's narrative tricks its viewers, but then reveals the manipulations that are capable with film. The shift between styles of shooting, lighting and camera work from the first half to the second invite for awareness, introspection, and reflection about how narratees "buy" into the images and sounds of "real" people as they address us.

During the first half of the film, we hear the women speak in interview style, yet the cinematic narration is a stylized visual feast. Lighting is carefully constructed, the camera moves about the women's bodies, they pace in and out of frame. Something is amiss in the presentation of this reality. We cannot quite tell what is happening yet. Once the film shifts and the women begin to talk about their roles in the same film, reactions of frustration,

embarrassment, awe and confusion are evoked. Narratees buy into the film's presentation of truth on some level.

"Fiction operates right in the heart of documentation," says Trinh (Framer Framed 168) and we are uncomfortable with that.

Commentary within the film world on the film itself situates Trinh's film in what Nichols calls the reflexive documentary, whereby "the historical world becomes, itself, the topic of cinematic meditation...we now hear the filmmaker engage in metacommentary" (Representing Reality 56). Not only do feminist filmmakers examine the what of story, they examine how that is presented to audiences. Form, strategy, structures, style, conventions, expectation, audience reaction, and theoretical criticism are uncovered from their ideologically invisible states. The filmmaker now addresses the viewer through herself or through the subject, rather than the subject directly addressing the viewer. Reflexive documentaries are not texts which lull viewers into complicity about women and the conditions of gender oppression. They put it at the forefront by showing viewers how gender itself is a construction based on arbitrary ideological, social and cultural contingencies. Nichols states that

Reflexivity and consciousness-raising go hand in hand because it is through an awareness of form and structure and its determining effects that new forms and structures can be brought into being, not only in theory, or aesthetically, but in practice, socially" (Representing Reality 67).

A Narratology of Boundaries:

Conclusions on the Feminist Cinema of Trinh Minh-ha

The feministically oriented narrative of Trinh Minh-ha exemplifies itself in several respects. First off, like our previous filmmakers in this study, Trinh utilizes multiple voices in character narration both on the intradiegetic and extradiegetic levels. This expands the concept of narrative voice to include the communal voice as a useful narratological category. Women speak on a circle within the circle of many women. The act of speaking from the margins that bell hooks writes about is not only a place of empowerment and patriarchal disobedience, it is also one of community.

The use of multiple extradiegetic narrators provides commentary on gender differences, histories of women, and narrative itself as a record keeper. On the extradiegetic level, the conceptual/collaborative narrator is illustrated by Trinh's involvement with her subjects in pre-production and production, whether they be Vietnamese non-professional actors or villagers in Senegal. Trinh's involvement as omniscient, extradiegetic narrator in both of the films illustrates that the conceptual/collaborative narrator is also the primary focalizer through which character and cinematic narration operates.

Furthermore, Trinh voices a feminist narratology simply by making the kinds of films which question language, gender discourse, colonialization, patriarchy and the representation of women's bodies, spaces and stories.

Trinh's film work suggests that a feminist cinematic narration is both conscious and reflexive. She employs many of the cinematic techniques that feminists have used to disrupt the mainstream, narrative of invisibility. The counter-narrative techniques illustrate that narrative has to be expanded to incorporate different styles and channels of visual and aural expression.

Finally, Trinh centralizes women and their experiences in her films. This centers feminist ideology and culture as narrative context and content. Women's experiences are centered for the primary purpose of questioning their continued absence -- in mainstream film, in language, in history. Yet their positions at the center remain there only briefly as Trinh continually utilizes the palate of cinematic techniques to disrupt the viewing experience and shift the focus of subject. She centers women to call attention to centering as a political tool of subjectivity. And subjectivity is continually mobile.

Vietnamese women are given spaces to voice stories about their lives and their sister's lives. In this voicing, we are reminded that language is an arbitrary phenomena and that history is captured for only a brief moment as spaces of visual culture and linguistic expression. Feminist filmmakers continue the project of shining beacons on those spaces. Cat Tien, speaking in the first half of the film says:

I will tell you the lives of women who are the misfits of history. They are by the thousands, those who live in economic

distress. They sell everything that is marketable, including their bodies to support the family. They deny their dignity to survive and become prostitutes in a socialist society (Framer Framed 66).

Trinh works in a space where time and history are not linear, but rather displaced so that the gateways of entry into meaning and memory are fluid and changing. What remains important is the visualizing of women and "the specific nature of problems women of many times and many places have to undergo -- as women" (Trinh Framer Framed 209). In mainstream media and visual culture, like Vietnamese women during the war, women have been photographed "for causes in which women hardly come out as subjects -- never fully witnessing, only glorified as heroines or victimized as bystanders of, spectators to, and exiles in their own history" (Framer Framed 210). Feminist films are holders of redemptive memory. They envision shifting consciousness and are elements of change.

Thus hope is alive as long as there is a witness - or to evoke a statement in the film, as long as the witnesses themselves do not die without witnesses (Framer Framed 208).

Notes

1. A koan comes from Zen philosophy. It is a question or statement usually posed to a student which usually has no "answer," but is asked or instructed to be thought about or meditated upon to get somewhere else: to the self, then to no self. The koan usually takes us to nothingness. There is neither an inside nor an outside, but something in between and inclusive of both and neither.
2. The Four Virtues of Cong Dung Ngon Hanh are to be skillful in her work, modest in her behavior, soft-spoken in her language and never raise her voice -- particularly in front of her husband or relatives, and be faultless in her principles. Amy Lawrence writes that "women's relations to their voices are constructed by culture as well...the third Ngon, applies to voice and speech...women's speech can be countenanced only for certain purposes and to the husband's advantage" (412). The three deferments and five human virtues call on women to always obey men: Daughter/Child, she must follow/obey her father; Married/Wife, she obey/must follow her husband; and Widow, she obey/must follow her son. "All her life she remains a minor depending on a man as on a central axle and can never be self governing" (Framer Framed 85).
3. This article was available in the biography file on Trinh T. Minh-ha at Women Make Movies, NY. An author byline is not listed.
4. Information on Vietnamese naming taken from world web site <http://www.saigon.com>
5. Author's brackets.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SYNTHESIS OF FEMINIST NARRATOLOGY:

OPEN ENDINGS AND EXTENSION IN THEORY

A feminist narratology bridges different perspectives of textual construction, analysis and signification. In doing so, the constructs of critical and theoretical practice are made more visible and theoretical expansion is possible. Narratology, from a feminist perspective, provides for analysis of cultural, ideological and contextual influences when studying story elements and their discursive means of presentation. Moreover, a feminist perspective contributes to other disciplines which have implemented narrative studies like history, rhetoric and communication, and discourse analysis.

A feminist narratology works within some of the boundaries of traditional narratology by utilizing the typological categories of narrative theory to illustrate where they are useful and where they do, or do not, adequately reflect the influence that gender has on a text. The practice of a feminist narratology also expands categories of narrative type, form and function by illustrating that several new categories for inquiry are relevant to this field of film theory and criticism. Feminist narratology expands our understanding of multiplicities in narrative discourse construction and story experience.

Feminist oriented narratology provides for theoretical and critical development in narrative studies because it not

only questions the basic tenants that are its own foundation, but it also leaves us with a variety of open endings in the theoretical pursuit of reading narrative texts. What feminist narratology does is remind us that film criticism and theory are continually mobile and need to change depending on the differences that individual filmmakers bring to their films and the expressions that come through these films. ¹ Ansgar Nünning writes that

Such an approach takes narrative techniques to be formal means of expressing culture specific experiences and meaning structure and attempts through an investigation of narrative processes to gain...insights into gender specific attitudes, thinking habits and living conditions (105).

Theory is extended in the field of narratology through the exploration of method and application of critical tools across different filmmakers. Theory continues to remain mobile. That is the major contribution of considering gender in relation to narrative. Gender reminds us that texts, like the individuals involved in constructing and/or viewing them, offer dynamic points of difference and creativity that continually shift and transform. Film theory according to Trinh Minh-ha:

Seems to be heading toward a dead end as it tends to become a mere form of administrative inquisition. In reflecting on language(s) as a crucial site for social change, theory should precisely challenge such a compartmentalized view of the world and render perceptible the (linguistic) cracks existing in every argument while questioning the nature of oppression and its diverse manifestations (Framer Framed (153)).

And so while some fields of academic inquiry find comfort in

stable modes of critical analysis and theoretical development, film studies is a discipline which rarely is finite. For if we study language, in its perpetual subjective and fluctuating state, film languages also change. Cinematic expression has a dynamic relationship with the cultural, ideological, political, economic and aesthetic milieu. Film changes for these reasons and is also the result of these social and creative forces. Film theorists work with the often unsettling phenomenon that they can never live in the space of completeness. Film theory, like criticism is a practice, not an arrived condition or circumstance. And it is a practice of activism if one chooses to examine gender. As Trinh Minh-ha notes, "film theory as a practice...changes your life entirely, because it acts on your conscience" (Framer Framed 123). And film narratologists, who dare to move out of the comfort zones of their arduous methodological modes of inquiry, find that gender, race, regionality, and other differences are sites of opportunity, self-consciousness and enlightenment. "As feminists have insistently pointed out, women are not only oppressed economically, but also culturally and politically, in the very practices of signifying and reasoning. Language is therefore an extremely important site of struggle." (Framer Framed 154). And language is the basis for both the construction and reflection of itself.

Cinema scholars and filmmakers theorize with film, not necessarily about it. A feminist narratology is a theoretical and critical practice which reflects on the

development of theoretical constructs, while simultaneously offering textual criticism within those constructs. This is the same experience for feminist filmmakers. They construct a narrative, or an expression of some reality, while at the same time looking inward at that constructed reality.

Theory becomes a practice of creativity, argument, critical thinking, and shifting consciousness as much as making a film does. Feminist narratology explains the gender centeredness of texts while at the same time exploring gender as a social and linguistic construct. Trinh writes that:

Theory becomes a mere accessory to practice when it speaks from a safe place, while practice merely illustrates theory when the relationship between the two remains one of domination-submission and of totalization. I see theory as a constant questioning of the framing of consciousness -- a practice capable of informing another practice, such as film production, in a reciprocal challenge...Theory always has the possibility, even the probability, of leading the other practice to 'dangerous' places, and vice versa (Framer Framed 123).

And so as feminist filmmakers look critically at themselves as creators of meaning, their films begin to do the same. The result is an analytical method which illuminates reflexivity in film practice and in its own critical practice. This is double voicing, a frequent occurrence in feminist texts. Elaine Shelly adds that English makes it difficult

...to talk about multiplicity as more than either/or. I tried to think of words in English that express some sort of ambiguity, some sort of this and that. I really couldn't think of a lot of words. I could

think of phrases and most of them were phrases that are almost idiomatic, almost slang. Even though these phrases imply something that is not definite, it is still either this not definite or that not definite. There's still duality implied in those words ("Multiplying Multiplicities" 51).

A feminist narratology suggests that both film practice and theory are reflexive endeavors, although there have been literary and film texts throughout history that have employed this reflexivity and playfulness with form. The feminist critic and the filmmaker must be aware of the constructions that their languaging arbitrarily circulates - especially those around the axis of gender difference. They must also be conscious of historical and cultural contexts when constructing their films, and the theory which is patterned from the critical analysis of those films. Nünning reminds us that

A feminist narrative theory goes on the assumption that the narrative arrangement is a historically relevant indicator of feminine experience of reality, that the category of gender must be considered in the building of models and that the relation to reality in literature [or film] should not be excluded (105).²

There are specific narratological considerations when a feminist or "reformed narratology" (Lanser "Toward a Feminist Narratology" 346) is developed. The categories of temporality, focalization and voice are expanded through consideration of gender in narrative. In addition, new categories, like that of the conceptual/collaborative narrator, are useful to move the textual inquiry away from the text-based method of study that it has historically been

situated or centralized around.

Temporality and Feminist Narrative

Temporality is a relevant area of study in feminist narratology in that it affects narrative criticism both thematically and structurally. There is a proliferation of women's texts that in some manner thematically and/or contextually address history, memory, and re-visioning the past. New access to local knowledges of women's histories are created to be told again in the circle of telling.

A feminist-oriented narratology also offers expansion of narrative models to better understand the elusive concept of time itself. The new category of temporal "interludes" suggests that narrative time folds back into itself and better relates to women's experiences of birth, breast feeding, and creativity (creation). The use of detours, repetitions and lack of narrative closure or resolution are patterns found in feminist narrative. Not only do we have more time to view women as central characters through extended shots and durational stretches, but we realize that time is a construct of linear language and storytelling. And linear storytelling does not necessarily suit the experiences of all people. Extension in narrative duration calls attention to Western storytelling techniques and provides spaces for ideological or commentative intervention.

Chapter four describes how Julie Dash utilizes interludes to focus on black women's images. She lingers on

the bodies and faces of women who have not had that privilege in mainstream film form. Temporal extension centralizes women's experiences and subjectivity. Dash creates that mythic memory of, and for, black women as her characters remember and recall their past for future generations.

In the griot method of storytelling time is not linear, but rather cyclical, repeating and elliptical. In her diasporic "in-between" temporal themes, Dash reflects on ancestral time -- that temporal and relational link between African ancestry and the Peasant family. Dash's construct of time is related to the patterns of African time, which emphasize only a past and a present. Her use of flashbacks and slow motion interludes connect events across time. These metadiegetic indicators are ones of memory and ancestral communion.

The experiences of the characters who choose to make the crossover to the mainland and migration North catapult them into the Western concept of time which is future directed. For those characters, there is a recollection of the past as they now direct themselves toward the "promised land," which mythically exists in the industrialized northern United States and in the future.

Mona Smith's feminist aesthetics work within her cultural heritage of being a Native American. She operates from the space of "Indian Time," where events happen in the now or throughout time, but are not constructed on a linear continuum. Although she deals centrally with the subject

matter of AIDS, which has a specific location in temporal/linear history, Smith's films do not progress toward absolute resolution or cinematic closure. An indicator of where the feminist and Native aesthetic meet appears in the category of tense. The films operate more on a spiraling model of narration rather than a horizontal, linear model. This relates to the Native tradition of "Tikiveh," one of orality and community history.

Trinh Minh-ha's metanarration directly confronts the structures of linear time and narrative unfolding. To her, time does not exist. She says that "working in the realm of stories and popular memories, I was not interested in a linear construction of time" in Surname Viet Given Name Nam. (Framer Framed 208). Time and place are used as poetic expression in addition to physical and material signifiers of the real world. The archival images, reenacted interviews, visual quotes and verbal text "continually displace the notion of fixed time and place" (Trinh Framer Framed 209). Temporality is thwarted and is replaced by a poetic and/or rhythmic timing. Speaking about Surname Viet Given Name Nam, Trinh comments that

The poetry you hear in the film is largely taken from oral traditions. The verses are proverbs and songs that help to derange the will to mean and to disrupt as well as expand language in its continuities. The narratives shift back and forth between being informational, reflective or analytical, and being emotional, trivial, absurd or anecdotal (Framer Framed 173).

This allows the film to be read on different levels rather than on the basis of a simple linear progression. In an

interview with Trinh Minh-ha, feminist filmmaker Laleen Jayamane says that Trinh sees the reading of a film as a creative act.

A film is like a page of paper which I offer to the viewer, I am responsible for what is within the boundary of the paper, but I do not control and do not wish to control its folding. The viewer can fold it horizontally, obliquely, vertically. They can weave the elements to their liking and background. The interfolding and interweaving situation is what I consider to be most exciting in making films (Jayamane quoting Trinh Framer Framed 173).

The category of tense illustrates that a feminist narratology criticizes dominant models of narrative and offers alternative perceptions of the experience of time.

One of the problems with the above discussion of temporality is that I cannot wholly assert that gender and the feminist narrative perspective alone result in different presentations and understandings of tense. Many women filmmakers offer temporality as a central component in their cinematic expression to present women's experiences with time. Many women filmmakers also centralize time as a thematic element in their attempts to re-historicize women's experiences. And women filmmakers critique the patriarchal linear model of time through disruptive cinematic techniques. But I cannot suggest that the experiences of being a Native American, an African of the diaspora or a Vietnamese American woman do not also influence the way temporality is constructed. Nor can I assert that this is not also a result of film form, style or generic choices. This illustrates that a feminist narratology opens up the

field of inquiry to examine other cross cultural and contextual factors that may influence how one constructs temporality. Gender difference alone does not affect one's experience of the time-space continuum, although similar patterns of temporal representation and arrangement can be located across these women filmmakers. Perhaps these temporal themes are a continuum of women's multiple experiences and identities.

Focalization and the Feminist Aesthetic Experience

Focalization provides for understanding emotional and cognitive narrative subjectivity. If women are central characters, the narrative is a representative of their perspectives. Spectators begin to "see" the lives of women and understand their experiences through narrative subjectivity. A feminist narratology recognizes women as central characters and understands that the cinematic narration can be intradiegetically focalized through a particular character's perspective. Beyond that, a feminist understanding of focalization recognizes the authoring agents beyond, and within, the text. Description, commentary and interpretive functions of the narrative are recognized as the feminist way of seeing and voicing the narration. In feminist narratology the category of focalization folds into the new extra-textual category of conceptual/collaborative narration.

For example, in Daughters of the Dust the character narrators are focalized through an Africa-centric and

matriarchal perspective. Through conceptual/collaborative narration, the film offers multi-textual layers of history, culture and memory. Daughters of the Dust first appears to be focalized through the Unborn Child, who indicates that the narrative is her memory -- "I remember and I recall." But the story moves through multiple narrators, cinematic perspectives and modes of focalization. The assorted perspectives of life on the sea islands are filtered through various focalizers who make up the multiplicity of narrative agents and their communal experience. Most of these focalizing agents are women, so the community is a matriarchal one. Focalization is mobile throughout Daughters of the Dust as it presents the many voices and visions of memory of the Peasant family in their life on the sea islands and cross over to the mainland. The film is also focalized through Julie Dash, who, through careful research, writing, and production choices, communicates a black women's ideology and cultural expression. Thus, focalization is a conscious act of narrative construction and collaborative arrangement.

The commentative cinematic focalizer moves beyond a single story of memory as it centers women as the creators and retainers of cultural memories. The focalizing agents remind audiences of the Africanisms retained in the sea islands, foregrounds the importance of women's culture, and provides for communal spatial relationships.

Mona Smith's videos are focalized and influenced by both educational and native-centered expressive modes. Her

videos offer community leadership and teachings on AIDS, sexuality, native experiences and healing. And although the internal focalizers shift, the primary way her films are narrated are through poetic filters which reflect part of the developing native film aesthetic. Smith places the real lessons of AIDS and sexuality in her works within an expressive language.

All of Smith's videos illustrate the use of multiple character narrators and multiple focalizers. The focalization of community, oral history and the native aesthetic are communicated through her work. Smith's presence as voiceover narrator in That Which Is Between further illustrates that the conceptual/collaborative narrator folds herself into the narrative as on screen voice and commentator.

The work of Trinh Minh-ha is the most complex example of narrative focalization. Trinh's work accomplishes the same focus of centralizing women and utilizing multiple voices in the telling of the narrative. The narrative is focalized through various channels. But Trinh moves further into the reflexive nature of narrative focalization. She comments on focalization -- perspective and subjectivity -- in both of the films in this study. Both Reassemblage and Surname Viet Given Name Nam invite spectators to become aware of the act of spectating. In that invitation, Trinh assumes that the viewer will also have a consciousness of the deliberate construction of the texts that they watch. Narrative perspective then becomes a didactic exercise on

the ability of visuals and language to create our realities. She says "of course, the image can neither prove what it says nor why it is worth saying it; the impotence of proofs, the impossibility of a single truth in witnessing, remembering, recording, rereading" (Framer Framed 83).

When Trinh puts herself into her films as the commentative narrator, it calls attention to the focalization of the visual elements as fabrication. The cinematic narration is disrupted by the conceptual/collaborative narrator's comments, voice, mimicry and irony. She says in voice over "The pose is always present, and accidents on film are known as 'controlled accidents.' By choosing the most direct and spontaneous form of voicing and documenting, I find myself closer to fiction" (Framer Framed 78).

The insertion of the conceptual/collaborative narrator into narrative analysis results in an understanding of how narration that is focalized through several different feminist perspectives. This is seen through research and writing portrayed in the historical representation of Julie Dash's film characters and their world. It is understood by way of visual expression from a native aesthetic and cosmology in Mona Smith's films. And conceptual/collaborative narrative focalization is represented as the cinematic voice of consciousness, commentary and reflexivity by Trinh Minh-ha.

The Voice of Feminist Aesthetics:

Women Recount Their Histories

The narratological category of voice is clearly one of the most important categories for inquiry for a feminist oriented narratology. Analysis of the feminist narrative strategies of the three filmmakers in this study have elucidated voice in three areas: character narration and communal voices, feminist cinematic narration and voicing the feminist film through conceptual/collaborative narration.

A feminist narratology recognizes that voice is influenced by historical and contextual factors, those specifically related to gender and the experiences of being a woman. Not only does this influence diegetic instances of narration, but it also affects the reading/viewing of the text. Traditionally narratologists have been concerned with formal structures and not with influences of culture, ideology, and other social constructions like gender difference. A feminist narratology recognizes that the voice of a text comes from within the text, and also from a changing historical and social environment. Feminist film critics have focused primarily on context without considering formal structures of narrative and patterns of subjectivity, representation and vocal address. The combination of these two perspectives extends both of them to combine a formal structuralism with a contextual awareness.

The function of voice is to address the narratee,

provide testimonials and interpret the story. The multiple character narrators provide testimonials about their lives as they both address other character narrators and extradiegetic narratees. When characters narrate stories from the perspective of "I" they communicate what Lanser calls personal narration ("Fictions of Authority" 18, Machiorlatti 173). In Daughters of the Dust, the Unborn Child operates within the mode of personal narration, providing testimonial and witnessing of the Peazant family crossover to the mainland. Nana also assumes a principal narratorial voice in this film. The centralizing of these two character narrators bridges the ties of ancestral legacy -- the old Africans and the new Americans. These two voices frame the other Peazants who reside within the communal narratorial expression of voice. The feminist narrative is constructed with multiple perspectives which forward a woman centered collective consciousness. The communal voices of this text lead to an understanding of black feminist cultural ideology.

Making the feminist film is as much an expression of narrative voice as character narrators or cinematic narration. The role that the conceptual/collaborative narrator serves is to bring forth women's histories for the purpose of creating redeeming memories. This redemptive history counteracts popular images and stereotypes. That role also involves, in some respects, a consciousness of the power relationships that film can create and perpetuate. In creating and representing women we subjectivize them while

at the same time providing spaces for their voices to have a presence in a world of patriarchal induced absence. The making of a film is the voicing of the consciousness of gender relations and how they represent other power structures inherent in our uses of language. Elaine Shelly says that "first of all, I consider that everyone has a multitude of identities" ("Multiplying Multiplicities" 51). In feminist cinematic expression how are these multiple identities to manifest themselves without looking like the one-dimensional portrayals of mainstream film? And if they are not expressed, that leaves an absence in the constant power struggle of image creation, control and expression. Voicing the feminist text reminds us of the paradox of constructing narrative for public consumption. All the potential referents of identity are reflections of the binarist condition of language. But a feminist filmmaker like Trinh Minh-ha calls attention to this condition of multiple referents of meaning in film narration simply by not allowing narrative voice to present them as invisible. Her voice is a reflexive one which centers identity and the politics of representation. The feminist voice recognizes itself.

Feminist cinematic narration is also an element of narrative voice. It seems relevant here to include a discussion on visual cinematic techniques. What, if any, visuals suggest a gendered perspective? In some instances we can locate the use of long shots which frame the community of women characters. This supports the aural

aspect of communal voice. But in contrast, for example, Julie Dash also utilizes closeups of black women to give "time for audiences to study the subjects" (Gaither 103). According to Laura Gaither, Dash may render her female characters more visible through closeups and slow motion, but she also "calls into question the way images are created in mainstream Hollywood film and the way these images sustain mainstream ideology, depictions of so-called reality" (104). She does this by centralizing black women -- their voices and bodies -- as the narrative agents. Can a feminist narratology assert that the text reflects a feminist narration simply by centralizing women's images and voices? This is a questionable assertion, and one that needs to be explored through this developing methodological mode across other filmmakers representations of women characters, women's lives and women's historical condition. Gender influences cinematic narration, but it is difficult to identify specific visual techniques as feminist techniques. The content of the film frame and the thematic context in which visual techniques are utilized indicate a gendered aesthetic more so than the technique itself. Mise-en-scène -- shot distance, movement, angle, transitions, speed -- is part of a contextual, historical whole.

The primary set of techniques that can be considered feminist are those which call attention to, and disrupt the conventions of, dominant images. In film history, however, this rupturing of film narrative has not been solely the terrain of women filmmakers. Feminist filmmakers are not

the only ones to question power relations. They critique texts based on the axis of gender. When film form is questioned and transformed, a feminist aesthetic does so with women at its center to convey their stories in new ways while remaining aware of the conventions of that representation. This is seen primarily in the work of Trinh Minh-ha who continually presents visually striking images, overlapped upon other images and often repeated in rhythmic sequencing. Her use of multiple visual elements -- text, newsreel footage, reenacted interviews, live-action footage, negative space, and black screen among others -- resonates among viewers on the experiential level. The film style evokes a consciousness of the text as an element of power which creates, speaks about and for, and images experiences of otherness. If films represent an "other," they construct them and assert power over them in that act.

The cinematic narrator acts as a synergistic agent on the spectator's consciousness. This is on many levels -- that of memory, ethnic identity, gender, sexual orientation, power relationships. Even though the conceptual/collaborative narrator acts as a bridge between the creation of the text, personal intention and narrative address, this does not suggest that new relationships and meanings are not invoked by that text alone. Emergence of meaning is a metaphenomena of narrative evocation. Film is a medium which reflects the difficulty of prediction.

**The Conceptual/Collaborative Narrator:
Feminists Making Feminist Films**

The new narrative category of the conceptual/collaborative narrator supplements and modifies current categories of narratological analysis. It takes into account the contextual and historical influences on texts and their multiple readings. In this category we can consider the purpose of the text -- or why the filmmaker made the film. We can also bring to textual analysis the influences of the filmmaker and those factors of influence which occur in research, writing, production and personal philosophy. The feminist aesthetic involves the making of the film itself through a gendered experience.

When women filmmakers, production personnel and actors centralize the lives of women, they voice a feminist commentary. Nünning writes that for the most part, context is an open-ended question of "how the correlation between literary themes and forms can be made with historical, biographic, social and political factors of conditions" (117). Nünning asserts, however, that a feministically oriented narrative model questions and breaks down the text centered focus of analysis and the "naive mimetic of many feministic works" (117). It also takes "into account the dynamic exchange of effect between literature [film] and historical reality" (117).³ Both feminism and narratology expand with the consideration of a conceptual/collaborative narrator.

Conclusions and Avenues for Future Studies in Narrative and Gender

More research perspectives are opened up through the consideration of a feminist narratology, not only in regards to gender and narrative, but also to other differences among text creators. Nünning writes that the

...alliance of the two approaches promises...not only a gain of analytical precision for feminist studies but also it opens up for narratology many new cultural, historically relevant ways of looking at problems and perspectives (117).

This research begins the initial discussion of whether gender is an adequate contingency on which to expand and modify current models of narratology. Its usefulness will be tested further when more texts and filmmakers are studied using the precepts outlined here. Future work within this body of inquiry should first begin with women filmmakers across boundaries of race, culture, regionality, genre and style. A feminist narratology can also be applied to films which are directed by men, primarily those which centralize women's stories and experiences. The previously outlined methodological and theoretical concepts can also be applied to films which centralize the male experience to examine how constructions of masculinity and femininity are presented in films. My first goal, however, is to see that women filmmakers and feminist scholars have useful tools with which to understand film by, for and about women and women's culture. New visual texts such as CD ROMs, hyper media and World Wide Web pages also require new analytical tools with

which to examine their multiple channels of narration.

The limitations of this study are also its strengths. Can a feminist narratology be used to exemplify a universal condition of being a woman in her diverse societies? Beni Matias asks what influence "multiple personalities: multiple identities and multiple creative roles" have on the production of art and criticism. "How do we negotiate these differences and where do they come from?" ("Multiplying Multiplicities" 51). Different cultures harmonize and interact with each other, but no one theory or mode of critical analysis can explain all the experiences and filmic texts of, or about, women. Trinh Minh-ha says that

To cut across boundaries and borderlines is to leave the maze of categories and labels. It is to resist simplistic attempts at classifying, to resist the comfort of belonging to a classification and of producing classifiable works (Framer Framed 161).

Film is a critical process with multiple motives, meanings, and purposes. And film analysis is an interpretive method and means of translation which reflects that same assertion. The process of unmasking and making visible signifying techniques, cultural constructions and image/object representation of gender is the goal both of feminist filmmakers and feminist narrative. There has been limited discussion within the traditions of narratology with which to language this curiosity up until now.

Overall, this work has illustrated that a feminist perspective is useful to the field of narratology and that narrative theoretical categories are useful in constructing

methods for feminist film criticism. This alliance can contribute to the paradigmatic (re) construction of cinematic narrative analysis and theoretical exploration.

Notes

1. At the University Film and Video Association conference in 1996, the author presented an outline of feminist narratology. Following this discussion, many women filmmakers in the audience asked me if I would watch their films. They stated that what they attempted to do in their film production practice was finally explained by someone. The theoretical questions and conclusions that I began to draw were those already practiced in many films by these women, although a critical and theoretical language to discuss them was previously insufficient.

2. I have added the brackets to include film, as Nünning focuses solely on gender and literature.

3. Author's bracket addition of film.

APPENDIX

THE FILMOGRAPHY OF JULIE DASH

Breaths

Written and Performed by
Sweet Honey in the Rock
Music Video, 1994

Lost in the Night

Written and Performed by Peabo Bryson
Music Video, 1992

Daughters of The Dust

35mm Feature Film, 1992

Praise House

Written and Performed by
Urban Bush Women
16mm Short, Made for Television, 1991

Relatives

Written and Performed by Ishamel Huston Jones
Super 8 Short, Made for Television, 1990

Phyliss Wheatly, YWCA
Educational Short, 1989

Preventing Cancer

Educational Short, Morehouse School of Medicine, 1989

Breaking the Silence

National Black Women's Health Project Video
(NBWHP), 1988

Illusions

16mm Short, 1983

Four Women

16mm Short, 1975

Diary of An African Nun

16mm Short, 1977

Working Models of Success

16mm Documentary, 1973

THE FILMOGRAPHY/VIDEOGRAPHY OF MONA SMITH

An Interruption in the Journey
Educational/Documentary, AIDS Survival Group, 1990

A Place in the Dream
(writer/producer)
Documentary, American Women's TransAntarctic Expedition, 1990

Honored By The Moon
Educational/Documentary video short
Minnesota American Indian AIDS Task Force, 1989-90

That Which Is Between
Experimental video short, Skyman-Smith, Image Electric, 1989

The Bridge: Stories of Hope, Stories of Fear
Educational Video, Program to Aid Victims of Sexual Assault, 1989

A New Direction in Indian Country
Sinte Gleska College, Rosebud, SD, 1988

Her Giveaway: A Spiritual Journey With AIDS
Educational/Documentary video short
Minnesota American Indian AIDS Task Force, 1988

Can We Talk? and Grow Up!
PSA w/Joan Rivers, 1986
Minnesota AIDS Project

Heartbeat, Drumbeat
Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center, 1986

THE FILMOGRAPHY OF TRINH T. MINH-HA

A Tale of Love
Dramatic Feature, 1995

Shoot For Contents
Experimental-Documentary, 1991

Surname Viet Given Name Nam
Experimental-Documentary, 1989

Naked Spaces - Living is Round
Experimental-Documentary, 1985

Reassemblage
Experimental-Documentary, 1982

REFERENCES

- Alexander, Karen. "Julie Dash, 'Daughters of the Dust' and a Black Aesthetic." Women and Film: A Sight and Sound Reader. Eds. Pam Cook and Philip Doss. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993: 224-231.
- Allen, Robert, ed. Channels of Discourse: Reassembled. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1992.
- Arbuthnot, Lucie, and Gail Seneca. "Pre-text and Text in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes." Film Reader 5 Evanston [IL]: Film Division/School of Speech, Northwestern University, (1982): 13-23. Rpt. in Issues in Feminist Film Criticism. Ed. Erens. 1990: 112-125.
- Argan, Giulio Carlo. "Ideology and Iconology." Trans. Rebecca West. The Language of Images. Ed. W.J.T. Mitchell. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980: 15-23.
- Asante, Karaimu Welsh. "Commonalities in African Dance: An Aesthetic Foundation for African Dance." African Culture: The Rhythms of Unity. Eds. Molefi Asante and K.W. Asante. 1995: 71-82
- Asante, Molefi Kete. Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge. 1990. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1992.
- , and Karaimu Welsh Asante, Eds. African Culture: The Rhythms of Unity. Westport: Greenwood, 1985.
- Bakhtin, M.M. "Discourses in the Novel." The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays. Trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981: 259-422.
- Bal, Mieke. Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative. 1985. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1992.
- , ed. On Storytelling: Essays in Narratology. Sonoma [CA]: Polebridge Press, 1991.
- Barnouw, Erik. Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film. New York: Oxford, 1983.
- Barthes, Roland. Elements of Semiology. Trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. New York: Hill & Wang, 1964.
- Baudry, Jean-Louis. "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus." Trans. Jean Andrews and Barnard Augst. Camera Obscura. 1 (Fall 1976): 104-126. Rpt. in Film Theory and Criticism. Eds. Mast et al. 1992. 302-312.
- Bataille, Gretchen, and Charles Silet, eds. The Pretend Indians: Images of Native Americans in the Movies.

- Ames[IA]: Iowa State UP, 1980.
- Beaver, Tom. Comments at "Producers's Forum I: Uncovering the Lies." Two Rivers Native Film and Video Festival, Minneapolis, Minnesota. October 10, 1991.
- Belenky, Mary Field, Blythe McVicker Clincky, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule. Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind. New York: Basic Books, 1986.
- Bennett, W. Lance, and Murray Edelman. "Toward a New Political Narrative." Journal of Communication. 35.4 (Autumn 1985): 156-171.
- Benstock, Shari, ed. Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.
- Berdyayev, Nikolai. Christian Existentialism. Trans. D.A. Lowrie. New York: Harper, 1965. Qtd. in Bierlein. Parallel Myths.
- Bhabha, Homi K. Nation and Narration. London/New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Bierlein, J.F. Parallel Myths. New York: Ballantine, 1994.
- Black, David Alan. "Narrative Level in the Fiction Cinema." Wide Angle. 8:3-4. (1986): 19-26.
- Blockson, Charles. "Sea Change in the Sea Islands: 'Nowhere to Lay Down Weary Head.'" National Geographic. 172. (December 1987): 735-763.
- Bobo, Jacqueline. "The Color Purple: Black Women as Cultural Readers." Jump Cut 33 (1988). Rpt. in Female Spectators. Pribram. 1992: 90-109.
- Bogle, Donald. Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films. New York: Viking Press, 1973.
- Bordwell, David. "Classical Hollywood Cinema: Narrational Principles and Procedures." Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. Ed. Philip Rosen. 1986. 17-34.
- Bosmajian, Haig. The Language of Oppression. Lanham [MD]: University Press of America, 1983.
- Bovenschen, Sylvia. "Uber die Frage: Gibt es eine weibliche Asthetik?" New German Critique. 12 (1977). "Is There A Feminist Aesthetic?" Trans. Beth Weckmueller. Feminist Aesthetics. Ed. Gisela Ecker. 1985. 23-50.
- Bowser, Kathryn. Guide to International Film and Video

- Festivals. New York: Foundation for Independent Video and Film, 1992.
- Boyd, Valerie. American Visions. [Review of Daughter of the Dust]. 6. (February 1991): 46-48.
- Branigan, Edward. Narrative Comprehension and Film. London/New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Brock, Bernard, Robert Scott, and James Chesebro. Eds. Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth Century Perspective. (3rd Ed.) Detroit, Wayne State UP, 1990.
- Brown, Mary, ed. Television and Women's Culture: The Politics of the Popular. London: Sage, 1990.
- Brouwer, Joel. "Repositioning: Center and Margin in Julie Dash's Daughters of the Dust." African American Review. 29.1 (Spring 1995): 5-17. CD-ROM. General Periodicals ASAP Database. A17276610.
- Browne, Nick. "The Spectator-in-the-Text: The Rhetoric of Stagecoach." Film Quarterly. 34.2 (Winter 1975-1976). Rpt. in Movies and Methods II. Ed. Nichols. 1985. 458-475.
- Bruckner, Jutta. "Nachbemerkingen," in Renate Mohrmann. Die frau mit der Kamera. Munchen: Hanser Verlag, 1980. "Women Behind The Camera." Trans. Harriet Anderson. Feminist Aesthetics. Ed. Gisela Ecker. 1985: 120-124.
- Buffalohead, Roger. "Film and Its Effect on Native Communities." Paper delivered at the Two Rivers Native Film and Video Festival, Minneapolis, Minnesota. October 10, 1991.
- Burgoyne, Robert. "The Cinematic Narrator: The Logic and Pragmatics of Impersonal Narration." Journal of Film and Video. 42.1 (Spring 1990): 3-16.
- Busia, Abena P. "What is Your Nation? Reconnecting Africa and Her Diaspora through Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*." Changing Our Own Words: Essays on Criticism, Theory, and Writing by Black Women. Ed. Cheryl A. Wall. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1991: 196-211.
- Byars, Jackie. All That Hollywood Allows: Re-reading Gender in 1950s Melodrama. Chapel Hill/London: U of North Carolina P/Routledge, 1991.
- Cade-Bambara, Toni. "Reading the Signs, Empowering the Eye" Daughters of the Dust and the Black Independent Cinema Movement." Black American Cinema. Ed. Manthia Diawara. New York/London: Routledge, 1993: 118-144.

- Cameron, Deborah, ed. The Feminist Critique of Language. London/New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Campbell-Hale, Janet. "Ancestress." Dancing on the Rim of the World: An Anthology of Contemporary Northwest Native American Writing. Ed. Andrea Lerner. Tucson: Sun Tracks/U of Arizona P: 1990: 87-88.
- . "Autobiography in Fiction." Dancing on the Rim of the World: An Anthology of Contemporary Northwest Native American Writing. Ed. Andrea Lerner. Tucson: Sun Tracks/U of Arizona P, 1990: 88-97.
- Cannon, Katie. "Womanist Perspectival Discourse and Cannon Formation." Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion. 9 (Spring/Fall 1993): 29-37.
- Carson, Diane, Linda Dittmar, and Janice R. Welch, eds. Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism. Minneapolis/ London: U of Minnesota P, 1994.
- Camera Obscura. Bloomington: Indiana UP. (1974 - Present)
- Camera Obscura. Bloomington: Indiana UP. "Imaging Technologies: Inscribing Science." Nos. 28-29, 1995.
- Champagne, Duane. Native America: Portrait of the Peoples. Detroit/London: Visible Ink, 1994.
- "Channel Surfing Through U.S. Culture in 20 Lands." New York Times 30 January 1994: H30-31.
- Chatman, Seymour. Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film. Ithaca/London: Cornell UP, 1990.
- . "On Deconstructing Narratology." Style. 22.1 (Spring 1988): 9-17.
- . Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film. Ithaca/London: Cornell UP, 1978.
- Chomsky, Noam. Syntactic Structures. Hague: Mouton, 1957.
- . Language and Mind. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1975.
- Clark, Veve, Ruth-Ellen Joeres, and Madelon Sprengnether, eds. Revising the Word and the World: Essays in Feminist Literary Criticism. Chicago/London: U of Chicago P, 1993.
- Citron, Michelle, Julia Lesage, Judith Mayne, B. Ruby Rich and Anna Marie Taylor. "Women and Film: A Discussion of Feminist Aesthetics." New German Critique. 13 (Winter 1978): 83-107.

- Collins, Patricia Hill. Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Comolli, Jean-Luc, and Jean Narboni. "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism." Film Theory and Criticism. Eds. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen and Leo Braudy. 1992: 682-689. Rpt. from "Preface to *Young Mr. Lincoln*," Screen. 13.3 (1972).
- Cook, Pam. "Approaching the Work of Dorothy Arzner." The Work of Dorothy Arzner: Towards a Feminist Cinema. Ed. Claire Johnston. London: British Film Institute, 1975: 9-18. Rpt. in Feminism and Film Theory. Ed. Penley. 1988: 46-56.
- Dalton, Mary. "Daughters of the Dust: A Script Review." Creative Screenwriting. 1.3 (Fall 1994): 86-98.
- Dash, Julie with Toni Cade Bambara and bell hooks. Daughters of The Dust: The Making of An African-American Women's Film. New York: The New Press, 1992.
- Davis, Zeniabu Irene. "An Interview with Julie Dash." Wide Angle. 13.3-4 (1991) 110-118.
- de Lauretis, Teresa. Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984.
- . "Rethinking Women's Cinema: Aesthetics and Feminist Theory." Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television. Ed. Diedre Pribram. 1988: 174-195. Rpt. in Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism. Eds. Diane Carson et al. 1994: 140-161.
- . Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.
- , ed. Feminist Studies, Critical Studies. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1986.
- Deming, Caren J. "*Hill Street Blues* as Narrative." Critical Studies in Mass Communication. 2.1 (March 1985): 1-22.
- Denfield, Rene. The New Victorians: A Young Woman's Challenge to the Old Feminist Order. New York: Warner, 1995.
- Dent, Gina, ed. with Michelle Wallace. Black Popular Culture. Seattle: Bay Press, 1992.
- Derrida, Jacques. On Grammatology. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1976.

- Diengott, Nilli. "Narratology and Feminism." Style. 22.1 (Spring 1988): 42-60.
- Doane, Mary Ann. The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Films of the 1940s. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.
- . "Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator." Screen. 23.3-4 (Sept-Oct 1982): 74-88.
- Dobkin, Bethami A. Tales of Terror: Television News and the Construction of the Terrorist Threat. New York: Praeger, 1992.
- DuBois, W.E.B. The Souls of Black Folks. 1903. New York: Penguin, 1989.
- Eagleton, Mary, ed. Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader. Oxford/New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986.
- Eagleton, Terry. Ideology: An Introduction. London: Verso, 1991.
- Ecker, Gisela, ed. Feminist Aesthetics. Trans. Harriet Anderson. Boston: Beacon Press, 1985.
- Eco, Umberto. Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986.
- Ellsworth, Elizabeth. "Illicit Pleasures: Feminist Spectators and Personal Best." Wide Angle 8.2 (1986). Rev. rpt. in Becoming Feminist: The Politics of Popular Culture. Ed. Leslie G. Roman and Linda K. Christian-Smith. Philadelphia: Falmer Press, 1988. Rpt. in Issues in Feminist Film Criticism. Ed. Erens. 1990: 183-196.
- Erens, Patricia, ed. Issues in Feminist Film Criticism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.
- Ermath, Elizabeth Deeds. Sequel to History: Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992.
- Ettema, James and Theodore Glasser. "Narrative Form and Moral Force: The Realization of Innocence and Guilt Through Investigative Journalism." Journal of Communication. 38 (Summer 1988): 8-26. Rpt. in Methods of Rhetorical Criticism. Eds. Bernard Brock, Robert Scott, James Chesebro. 1990: 256-272.
- Faludi, Susan. Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women. New York: Anchor Books, 1991.
- Fein, Judith. Indian Time: A Year of Discovery with the Native Americans of the Southwest. New York: Simon &

Schuster, 1993.

- Felski, Rita. Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change. Cambridge[MA]: Harvard UP, 1989.
- Fischer, Walter. "Narration as A Human Communication Paradigm." Communication Monographs. 51 (1984): 1-22.
- . "The Narrative Paradigm: An Elaboration." Communication Monographs. 52 (December 1985): 347-367. Rpt. in Methods of Rhetorical Criticism. Eds. Bernard Brock, Robert Scott, James Chesebro. 1990: 234-254.
- . Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value and Action. Columbia [SC]: U of South Carolina P, 1987.
- Fiske, John. "Television: Polysemy and Popularity." Critical Studies in Mass Communication 3 (1986): 391-408.
- Friar, Ralph and Natasha. The Only Good Indian: The Hollywood Gospel. New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1972.
- Gabriel, Teshome. "Toward a Critical Theory of Third World Films." Questions of Third Cinema. Eds. Pines and Willeman. 1991: 30-53.
- . "Third Cinema as Guardian of Popular Memory: Towards A Third Cinema Aesthetics." Questions of Third Cinema. Eds. Pines and Willeman. 1991: 53-64.
- Gaines, Jane. "White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory." Cultural Critique. 4 (Fall 1986). Rpt. in Issues in Feminist Film Criticism. Ed. Erens. 1990: 197-215.
- . "Women and Representation: Can We Enjoy Alternative Pleasure?" Jump Cut 29 (February 1984). Rev. rpt. in American Media and Mass Culture: Left Perspectives. Ed. Donald Lazere. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987. Rpt. in Issues in Feminist Film Criticism. Ed. Erens. 1990: 75-93.
- Gaither, Laura. "Close-up and Slow Motion in Julie Dash's Daughters of the Dust." Howard Journal of Communication. 7 (Summer 1996): 103-112.
- Genette, Gerard. Narrative Discourse, An Essay in Method. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980. Trans. from Figure III (1972).
- Genovese, Eugene. Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves

- Made. (1972) New York: Vintage, 1976.
- Gerima, Haile. "Triangular Cinema, Breaking Toys, and Dinknesh vs Lucy." Questions of Third Cinema. Eds. Pines and Willeman. 1991: 65-89.
- Gibson-Hudson, Gloria. "Aspects of Black Feminist Cultural Ideology in Films by Black Women Independent Artists." Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism. Ed. Carson et al. 1994: 365-379.
- . "African American Literary Criticism as a Model for the Analysis of Films by African American Women." Wide Angle 13.1-4 (July-October 1991): 45-54.
- . "The Ties that Bind: Cinematic Representations by Black Women." Quarterly Review of Film and Video. 15.2 (1994): 25-44.
- Ginsberg, Ruth. "In Pursuit of Self: Theme, Narration, and Focalization in Christa Wolf's *Patterns of Childhood*." Style. 26.3 (Fall 1992): 437-445.
- Glassman, Bernard. PhenomeNEWS. "Interview." Southfield, MI (September 1996): 3-4.
- Gledhill, Christine. "Pleasurable Negotiations." Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television. Ed. E. Deidre Pribram. 1988. London/New York: Verso, 1992: 64-89.
- , ed. Home Is Where the Heart is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film. London: BFI Press, 1987.
- Goldstein, Joseph. Insight Meditation: The Practice of Freedom. Boston/London: Shambhala, 1994.
- Goss, Linda, and Marian Barnes. Talk That Talk: An Anthology of African-American Storytelling. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989.
- Gottner-Abendroth, Heide. "Thesen zu einer matriarchalen Aesthetik," Die tanzende Göttin. Munchen, Verlag Frauenoffensive, 1982. "Nine Principles of a Matriarchal Aesthetic." Trans. Harriet Anderson. Feminist Aesthetic. Ed. Gisela Ecker. 1985: 81-94.
- Greene, Gayle. "Feminist Fiction and The Uses of Memory." Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society. 16.2 (Winter 1991): 290-321.
- Griffith, Kelley. Narrative Fiction: An Introduction and Anthology. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1994.
- Gronbeck, Bruce. "Narrative, Enactment, and Television

- Programming." Southern Speech Communication Journal.
48.2 (Spring 1983): 229-243.
- Haraway, Donna. Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Harding, M. Esther. Woman's Mysteries: A Psychological Interpretation of The Feminine Principle as Portrayed in Myth, Story and Dreams. 1989. London: Rider, 1991.
- Haskell, Molly. From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies. New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1974.
- Helgesen, Sally. The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership. New York/London: Currency/Doubleday, 1990.
- . The Web of Inclusion. New York/London: Currency/Doubleday, 1995.
- Hein, Hilde, and Carolyn Korsmeyer, eds. Aesthetics in Feminist Perspective. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993.
- Henderson, Brian. "Tense, Mood and Voice in Film." Film Quarterly. 36.4 (Summer 1983): 4-17.
- Hilger, Michael. The American Indian in Film. Metuchen[NJ]: Scarecrow, 1986.
- Hill Collins, Patricia. Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. 1990. New York/London: Routledge, 1991.
- Hirschfelder, Arlene, and Martha Kreipe de Montano, eds. The Native American Almanac: A Portrait of Native America Today. New York: Prentice Hall, 1993.
- Hoban, Pheobe. "A Building Dust Storm." New York Magazine. 30 March 1992: 27.
- Hooks, bell. Ain't I a Woman, Black Women and Feminism. Boston: South End Press, 1981.
- . Black Looks: Race and Representation. Boston: South End Press, 1992.
- . "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness." Framework. 36 (1989): 15-23.
- . Feminist Theory, From Margin to Center. Boston: South End Press, 1984.
- . "Out of the Academy and Into The Street." Ms. 3.1 (July/August 1992): 80-81.

- Howie, Bill. Honored by the Moon [video review]. Library Journal (15 September 1990). Women Make Movies Press File, New York.
- Huber, Jeffery. Her Giveaway: A Spiritual Journal With AIDS [Video Review]. Library Journal. 1 May 1991. Women Make Movies Press File, New York.
- Huddleston-Edgerton, Susan. "Re-membering the Mother Tongue(s): Toni Morrison, Julie Dash and the Language of Pedagogy." Cultural Studies. 9.2 (1995): 338-363.
- International Documentary: The Journal of the International Documentary Association. "Special Issue: 2nd Int'l Documentary Congress." 14.9 (December 1995/January 1996).
- Irigaray, Luce. Je, Tu Nous: Toward a Culture of Difference. New York/London: Routledge, 1993.
- Jaehne, Karen. "The 18th New Directors/New Films." Film Comment. (May/June 1989): 68. (Women Make Movies Biography File).
- Jardin, Alice. "Introduction to Julia Kristiva's 'Women's Time.'" Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society. 7.1 (Autumn 1981): 5-11.
- Jimenez, Mona. Honored by the Moon [Video Notes: Hybrid Identity Screening]. (1994). Women Make Movies Press Files.
- Johnston, Claire. "Dorothy Arzner: Critical Strategies." The Work of Dorothy Arzner: Towards a Feminist Cinema. Ed. Claire Johnston. London: British Film Institute, 1975. Rpt. in Feminism and Film Theory. Ed. Penley. 1988: 36-45.
- . "Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema." Notes on Women's Cinema. Ed. Claire Johnston. London: Society for Education in Film and Television, 1973: 24-31.
- Kapitanoff, Nancy. "Girls, Guys and Dolls." Pulse. (June 1996): 49-50.
- Kaplan, E. Ann. Women & Film: Both Sides of the Camera. 1983. London/New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Kirkwood, William. "Narrative and the Rhetoric of Possibility." Communication Monographs. 59 (March 1992): 31-47.
- Klotman, Phyllis, ed. Screenplays of the African American Experience. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1991.

- Kristiva, Julia. "Women's Time." Trans. Alice Jardin and Harry Blake. Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society. 7.1 (Autumn 1981): 13-35.
- . "Women's Time." The Kristeva Reader. Ed. Toril Moi. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986: 187-213.
- Kuhn, Annette and Susannah Radstone, eds. Women in Film: An International Guide. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1990.
- . Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema. Boston/London: Routledge/Kegan Paul, 1982.
- Lanser, Susan Sniader. "Toward A Feminist Narratology." Style. 20.1 (Spring 1986): 341-363.
- . "Shifting the Paradigm: Feminism and Narratology." Style. 22.1 (Spring 1988): 52-60.
- . Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice. Ithaca/London: Cornell UP, 1992.
- Larkin, Alile. "Black Women Filmmakers Defining Ourselves: Feminism in Our Own Voice." Female Spectators: Looking At Film and Television. Ed. Pribram. 1988: 157-173.
- Lawrence, Amy. "Women's Voices in Third World Cinema." Sound Theory/Sound Practice. Ed. Rick Altman. New York: Routledge, Chapman, Hall, 1992. Rpt. in Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism. Eds. Carson et al. 1994: 406-420.
- Lenk, Elisabeth. "The Self Reflecting Woman." Feminist Aesthetics. Ed. Gisela Ecker. 1985: 51-58.
- Lerner, Andrea, ed. Dancing on the Rim of the World: An Anthology of Contemporary Northwest Native American Writing. Tucson: Sun Tracks/U of Arizona P, 1990.
- Lesage, Julia. "The Political Aesthetics of the Feminist Documentary Film." Issues in Feminist Film Criticism. Ed. Erens. 1990: 222-237.
- Leuthold, Steven. "Social Accountability and the Production of Native American Film and Video." Wide Angle 16.1-2 (August 1994): 41-59.
- Leventhal, Frances. "Trinh Minh-ha Breaks Convention in Film." Asian Week. 17 February 1989: 24. (Women Make Movies Biography File)
- Litwack, Leon. Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery. New York: Vintage, 1979.

- Long-Scott, Austin. "Cover Story." Main (Newsletter of the National Alliance for Media Arts & Culture). Oakland: CA. (Winter 1996): 1, 7.
- Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House." This Bridge Called By Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color. Eds. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua. New York: Kutchen Table Press, 98-101.
- MacDonald, Scott. Avant Garde Film: Motion Studies. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Machiorlatti, Jennifer. "Zen and the Art of Documentary: Resolving the Attachment of Self To Subject." Paper presented at the University Film and Video Association Annual Conference. Bozeman, Montana. 1994.
- Maclean, Marie. "Oppositional Practices in Women's Traditional Narrative." New Literary Theory. 19.1 (Autumn 1987): 37-50.
- Martin, Joan. "The Notions of Difference for Emerging Womanist Ethics." Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion. 9 (Spring/Fall): 39-51.
- Masayeva, Victor. "The Emerging Native American Aesthetic." The Independent. 17.10 (December 1994): 20-27.
- Mast, Gerald, Marshall Cohen, and Leo Braudy, eds. Film Theory and Criticism. 1974. 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Matias, Beni. "Multiplying Multiplicities." [Participant]. Evergreen Chronicles 10.2 (Summer/Fall 1995): 51-58.
- Mayne, Judith. The Woman at the Keyhole. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990.
- . Directed by Dorothy Arzner. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1994.
- Mbiti, John. African Religions and Philosophy. New York: Doubleday, 1970.
- MazGee, Michael Calvin & John Nelson. "Narrative Reason in Public Argument." Journal of Communication. 35 (Autumn 1985): 139-155.
- Meerloo, Joost. Along the Fourth Dimension of Time: Man's Sense of Time and History. New York: John Dale, 1970.
- Mellencamp, Patricia. Indiscretions: Avant Garde Film, Video and Feminism. Bloomington/Indianapolis; Indiana

- UP, 1990.
- Modleski, Tania. "The Rhythms of Reception: Daytime Television and Women's Work." Regarding Television Critical Approaches: An Anthology. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. Frederick: U Publishers of America, 1983: 67-75.
- . "Never to Be Thirty-Six Years Old: Rebecca as Female Oedipal Drama." Wide Angle 5.1 (1982).
- . "Time and Desire in Women's Film." Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film. Ed. Gledhill. 1987: 326-338.
- . The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory. New York: Methuen, 1988.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, Ann Russo, and Loredes Torres, eds. Third World Women and The Politics of Feminism. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991.
- Moi, Toril. The Kristeva Reader. New York: Columbia UP, 1983.
- Moraga, Cherrie and Gloria Anzaldua, eds. This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color. 1981. New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983.
- Mueller, Roswitha and Kathleen Woodward, guest eds. "The Emotions, Gender, and Politics of Subjectivity." Discourse. 15.2 (Winter 1992-93).
- "Multiplying Multiplicities." Transcript of panel discussion co-sponsored by Evergreen Chronicles and The Minneapolis Center for Arts Criticism. Evergreen Chronicles. 10.2 (Summer/Fall 1995): 51-58.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Screen 16 (July-August 1975): 6-18. Rpt. in Feminism and Film Theory. Ed. Penley. 1988: 57-68.
- . Visual and Other Pleasures. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988.
- Newcomb, Horace. "On the Dialogic Aspects of Mass Communication." Critical Studies in Mass Communication. 1 (1984): 34-50.
- Nichols, Bill. Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary. Bloomington: Indiana UP. 1991.
- , ed. Movies and Methods. Vol II. Berkeley: U of California P, 1985.
- Nünning, Ansgar. "Gender and Narratology: Categories and

- Perspectives of Feministic Narrative." Zeitschrift fur Anglistik und Amerikanistik. 43.1-2 (1995): 102-121. Translation by Kenneth Deman (Wayne State University) commissioned by Jennifer Machiorlatti, December 1995.
- O'Connor, John. The Hollywood Indian: Stereotypes of Native Americans in Films. Trenton: New Jersey State Museum, 1976.
- On the Issues. Honored By The Moon [Video review]. (Spring 1994). Women Make Movies Press file.
- Penley, Constance, ed. Feminism and Film Theory. New York: Methuen, 1988.
- . The Future of Illusions: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1989.
- Pennington, Dorothy. "Time in African Culture." African Culture: The Rhythms of Unity. Eds. Molefi Kete Asante and Kariamuwelsh Asante. 1985: 123-140.
- Petro, Patrice. "Feminism and Film History." Camera Obscura 22 (January 1990). Rpt. in Multiple Voices. Eds. Carson et al. 1994: 65-81.
- Pines, Jim and Paul Willemen, eds. Questions of Third Cinema. 1989. London: British Film Institute, 1991.
- Press, Andrea. Women Watching Television: Gender, Class and Generation in the American Experience. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.
- Poulakos, J. "Rhetoric, The Sophists, and the Possible." Communication Monographs. 51 (1984): 215-226.
- Pribram, Diedre, ed. Female Spectators: Looking and Film and Television. 1988. London/New York: Verso, 1992.
- Prince, Gerald. "On Narratology (Past, Present, Future)." French Literature Series. 17 (1990): 1-14.
- . "Reviewing Narratology." Comparative Literature. 44.4 (Fall 1992): 409-414.
- . A Dictionary of Narratology. Lincoln: University of Nebraska P, 1987.
- Rabiger, Michael. Directing The Documentary. 2nd ed. Boston/London: Focal Press, 1992.
- Rakow, Lana, ed. Women Making Meaning: New Feminist Directions in Communication. New York: Routledge, 1992.

- Renov, Michael, ed. Theorizing Documentary. New York/London: Routledge, 1993.
- Reyna, Diane. "Teach Our Children Well." The Independent. 17.10 (December 1994): 25-26.
- Rich, B. Ruby. "In the Name of Feminist Film Criticism." Jump Cut 19 (1978). Rev. rpt. in Heresies 3.1 (1980). Rev. rpt. Movies and Methods. Vol II. Ed. Bill Nichols. 1985: 340-358. Rev. rpt. in Issues in Feminist Film Criticism. Ed. Patricia Erens. 1990: 268-287. Rev. rpt. Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism. Eds. Carson et al. 1994: 27-47.
- Ricoeur, Paul. Time and Narrative. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Ridinger, B.M. Honored By the Moon [Video review]. American Library Association. (November 1990): 682.
- Riley-Fast, Robin. "Borderland Voices in Contemporary Native American Poetry." Contemporary Literature. 36.3 (1995): 508-536.
- Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics. 1983. London/New York, Routledge, 1991.
- Rockwell, John. "The New Colossus: American Culture As Power Export." New York Times 30 January 1994: Arts Section.
- Rophie, Katherine Anne. The Morning After: Sex, Fear and Feminism. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1994.
- Rosen, Marjorie. Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies and The American Dream. New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1973.
- Rosen, Philip, ed. Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. New York: Columbia UP, 1986.
- Rosenberg, Jan. Women's Reflections: The Feminist Film Movement. 1979. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983.
- Rosenbarm, Jonathan. "Undermining Authority." Chicago Reader. 23 June 1989: 14. (Women Make Movies Biography file)
- Rowland, Robert C. "Narrative: Mode of Discourse or Paradigm?" Communication Monographs. 54.3 (September 1987): 264-275.
- Sams, Jamie. Sacred Path Cards: The Discovery of Self Through Native Teachings. San Francisco: Harper: 1990.

- Sarton, May. The Journal of A Solitude. New York: W.W. Norton, 1973.
- Silverman, Kaja. The Acoustic Mirror: The Female voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988.
- Shelly, Elaine. "Multiplying Multiplicities." [Participant]. Evergreen Chronicles. 10.2 (Summer/Fall 1995): 51-58.
- Shohat, Ella, and Robert Stam. Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Showalter, Elaine, ed. The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory. New York: Pantheon, 1985.
- . "Women's Time, Women's Space: Writing the History of Feminism Criticism." Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature. 3.1-2 (1984): 29-43.
- Shrage, Laurie. "Feminist Film Aesthetics: A Contextual Approach." Aesthetics in Feminist Perspective. Eds. Hein and Korsmeyer. 1993: 139-149.
- Silverman, Kaja. The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1988.
- Singer, Beverly. "Replaying the Native American Experience." The Independent. 17.10 (December 1994): 22-24.
- Small-McCarthy, Robin. "The Jazz Aesthetics in the Novels of Toni Morrison." Cultural Studies. 9.2 (1995): 293-300.
- Smith, Mona. That Which is Between. Synopsis/Fact Sheet. Available from filmmaker or through Women Make Movies, Inc. New York press file.
- . Electronic mail correspondence between Smith and Machiorlatti, August 5 and August 13, 1996.
- Smith-McCoy, Sheila. "Disruptions of Time: Narrative Legacies in Dash's Daughters of the Dust and Marshall's Praisesong for a Widow." Paper presented at the American Studies Association Annual Conference, Boston, MA. 1993.
- Smith, Valerie. "The Black Woman Independent: Representing Race and Gender." The New American Filmmakers Series. Screening Notes No. 34. New York: The Whitney Museum

of American Art, 1986.

- Sommers, Christina Hoff. Whole Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women. New York: Touchstone, 1995.
- Spigel, Lynn. Make Room For TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992.
- . "Women's Work." TV: The Critical View. Ed. Horace Newcomb. 5th Ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994: 19-45.
- Stacey, Jackie. "Desperately Seeking Difference." Screen 28.1 (Winter 1987). Rpt. in Issues in Feminist Film Criticism. Ed. Erens. 1990: 365-379.
- Stam, Robert, Robert Burgoyne, and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis. New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post Structuralism and Beyond. London/New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Sterritt, David. "Hanoi-born Filmmaker Turns her Lens on Africa." Christain Science Monitor. 19 November 1986: 31. (From Women Make Movies Press File).
- Stivale, Lezlie Hart. "Timely Considerations: Temporality and Gender in *La Fin de Cheri*." Criticism. 33.3 (Summer 1991): 353-369.
- Straayer, Chris. "Personal Best: Lesbian/Feminist Audience." Jump Cut 29 (February 1984): 40-44.
- Suleiman, Susan Rubin, ed. The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives. London/Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986.
- Tambling, Jeremy. Narrative and Ideology. Philadelphia, Open UP, 1991.
- Tannen, Deborah. You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men In Conversation. New York: Ballentine, 1990.
- Taylor, Clyde. "The L.A. Rebellion: A Turning Point in Black Cinema." Whitney Museum of American Art: The New Filmmakers Series. Screening Notes No. 26. New York: The Whitney Museum of American Art, 1986.
- *
Thistlethwaite, Susan B. "Narrative and Connection." Christianity and Crisis. 47 (March 1987): 71-75.
- Thomas, Deborah, and Catherine Saalfield. "Geechee Girl Goes Home." The Independent. 14.6 (July 1991): 27-29.
- Tilley, Allen. Plot Snakes and the Dynamics of Narrative Experience. Gainesville: U of Florida P, 1992.

- Trinh, Minh-ha. "Mechanical Eye, Electronic Ear and the Lure of Authenticity." Wide Angle; 58-63. Originally presented at "The Documentary Today: A Symposium," Film in the Cities (Minneapolis), 10-12 November 1983.
- , ed. "She, The Inappropriate/d Other." Discourse. 8 (Special Issue, Fall-Winter 1986-87).
- , ed. "(Un)Naming Cultures." Discourse. 11.2 (Special Issue, Spring-Summer 1989).
- . Framer Framed. London/New York: Routledge, 1992.
- . When The Moon Waxes Red. Representation, Gender & Cultural Politics. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- . Woman, Native, Other. Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989.
- Tulku, Tarthang. Time, Space and Knowledge. A New Vision of Reality. Berkeley: Dharma, 1977.
- Wade-Lewis, Margaret. "Lorenzo Dow Turner: African American Linguist." The Black Scholar. 21.4 (1991): 12-24.
- Walker, Janet. "Feminist Critical Practice: Female Discourse in Mildred Pierce." Film Reader. 5 (1982).
- Walker Arts Center. Black Filmmakers Series. Audio tape recording of June 1995 presentation/conversation with Halie Gerima and Arthur Jafa. Available through Arts Center Library.
- Wall, Cheryl, ed. Changing Our Own Words: Essays on Criticism, Theory and Writing by Black Women. 2nd Edition. New Brunswick/London: Rutgers UP, 1991.
- Warhol, Robyn. Gendered Interventions, Narrative Discourse in the Victorian Novel. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1989.
- . "Toward a Theory of the Engaging Narrator: Ernest Interventions in Gaskell, Stowe, and Eliot." PMLA. 101 (1986): 811-818.
- Warnick, B. "The Narrative Paradigm: Another Story." Quarterly Journal of Speech. 73.2 (May 1987): 172-182.
- Wei, William. The Asian American Movement. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993.
- Weigel, Sigrid. "Der schielende Blick: Thesen zur Geschichte weiblicher Schreibpraxis." Die verboregene Frau. Berlin: Argument verlag, 1983. "Double Focus: On the History of Women's Writing." Trans. Harriet

- Anderson. Feminist Aesthetics. Ed. Gisela Ecker. 1985: 59-80.
- Welbon, Yvonne. "Calling the Shots: Black Women Directors Take the Helm." The Independent. (March 1992): 18-22.
- White, Hayden. The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation. Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1987.
- . "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory." History and Theory. No 23. (1984):1-33.
- White, Joseph, and Thomas Parham. The Psychology of Blacks: An African American Perspective. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice, 1990.
- Williams, John. "Recreating Their Media Image: Two Generations of Black Women Filmmakers." Cineaste. 20.3 (1994): 38-40.
- . "Daughters of the Diaspora: A Filmography of Sixty-Five Black Women Independent Film and Video Makers." Cineaste. 20-3 (1994): 41-42.
- Williams, Linda. Something Else Besides a Mother: Stella Dallas and the Maternal Melodrama." Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film Ed. Gledhill. 1987: 299-325.
- Wilson, Clint and Felix Gutierrez. Race, Multiculturalism and the Media. 2nd Ed. Thousand Oaks[CA]: Sage, 1995.
- Winnett, Susan. "Coming Unstrung: Women, Men, Narrative, and the Principle of Pleasure." PMLA. 1.5-3 (1990): 505-518.
- Wolff, Kurt. "Local Filmmaker Questions Authority." Bay Guardian. 15 February 1989. (Women Make Movies Biography file).
- Women & Film 1972-1975
- Women Make Movies. 1994 Film and Video Catalog. 462 Broadway Suite 500C. New York, NY 10013.
- . Press Clipping/Biographical files on Julie Dash, Trinh Min-ha and Mona Smith reviewed by author October 1995. (These included resume, c.v. files, film facts sheets, various articles, press clippings and publicity flyers.)
- Wong, Sau-ling Cynthia. Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993.

Films Cited

- Daughters of the Dust Dir. Julie Dash. Geechee Girl Productions. (1991) 113 minutes. Distributor: Kino International (New York).
- Four Women Dir. Julie Dash. (1978) 10 minutes. Distributor: Women Make Movies (New York).
- Her Give Away: A Spiritual Journey with AIDS Dir. Mona Smith (1988) 21 minutes. Distributor: Women Make Movies (New York), Allies (Minneapolis, MN)
- Honored By the Moon Dir. Mona Smith. (1990) 15 minutes. Distributor: Women Make Movies (New York), Allies (Minneapolis, MN).
- Illusions Dir. Julie Dash. (1983) 34 minutes. Distributor: Third World Newsreel (New York), Women Make Movies (New York).
- Praise House Dir. Julie Dash in collaboration with Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, founder and choreographer of Urban Bush Women. (1991) 25 minutes. Produced for ALIVE TV, KTCA. Distributor: Women Make Movies (New York).
- Reassemblage Dir. Trinh T. Minh-ha. (1982) 40 minutes. Photographer, editor, writer: Trinh T. Minh-ha, Producers: Jean-Paul Bourdier and Trinh T. Minh-ha. Distributors: Women Make Movies (New York), Third World Newsreel (New York), The Museum of Modern Art (New York), Cinenova (London), Idera (Vancouver), Lightcome (Paris), Image Forum (Tokyo), The National Library of Australia (Canberra).
- Surname Viet Given Name Nam Dir. Trinh T. Minh-ha. (1989) 108 minutes. Writer, Producer: Trinh T. Minh-ha. Distributors: Women Make Movies (New York), The Museum of Modern Art (New York), Cinenova (London), Idera (Vancouver), Image Forum (Tokyo), The National Library of Australia (Canberra).
- That Which Is Between Dir. Mona Smith and Nan Toskey (1989-90) 8 minutes. Distributor: Women Make Movies (New York), Allies (Minneapolis, MN).

ABSTRACT

IMPLICATIONS OF A FEMINIST NARRATOLOGY:
TEMPORALITY, FOCALIZATION AND VOICE IN THE FILMS OF
JULIE DASH, MONA SMITH AND TRINH T. MINH-HA

by

JENNIFER ALYCE MACHIORLATTI

December, 1996

Advisors: Dr. Jackie Byars, Dr. John Spalding

Major: Communication (Radio/Television/Film)

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

This dissertation conducts feminist narrative textual analysis of films by three independent women film-makers-of-color: Julie Dash, Mona Smith and Trinh T. Minh-ha. The research utilizes traditional cinematic **narratological** methods combined with a **feminist perspective**.

Narratology is the structural/textual study of narrative organization, style and content. Feminism is a theoretical body of inquiry which lends implications of gender difference, power relationships, cinematic stereotypes, and cultural significance to textual analysis. Feminist inquiry contributes a social, cultural, ideological and historical perspective to the taxonomy of a structuralist narrative methodology. By combining this contextual perspective with a topological textual method, I propose consideration of a **feminist narratology** which explains how stories are structured, narrated and understood from divergent ideological and cultural positions, especially those positions which relate to gender, race and ethnic differences.

The study focuses on the narrative concepts of temporality (time), focalization (narrative perspective) and voice (narration) in selected films by each film maker in order to locate similarities and differences in narrative construction across different film texts and styles, which were produced at different times and across the contextual differences of ethnicity and historical conditions. This cross-methodological exploration elucidates that both narratology and feminism require reevaluation, evolution and mobility in the open-ended development of cinematic theory.

Feminist inquiry of narrative structure and meaning explores how women film makers interrogate dominant cinematic forms. These women film makers remember and examine their historical iconography and offer alternative ways to conceptualize subjectivity. Aesthetically, a feminist narrative model includes the use of communal, community-based voices in narrative recounting, cyclical and episodic temporal structures, female central characters, multiple focalizers, a consciousness of image construction and a sense of historical recovery.

Examining these narratological elements in film will allow us to understand film as a feminist medium that can (re)invent non-hegemonic images for the future which share in common ideological, structural, thematic and communicative goals.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Jennifer A. Machiorlatti was born on January 15, 1962 in Detroit, Michigan, and grew up in Milford, Michigan. Machiorlatti received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Telecommunication from Michigan State University in 1984. Upon graduation, she took a position at PM Magazine, a syndicated television magazine program. In 1985, she was hired by WKBD-TV50 in Detroit, Michigan, as a television programming assistant. While at TV50, Machiorlatti was promoted to programming administrator and then station publicist.

Machiorlatti left WKBD to pursue a Master of Arts degree in American Studies from Michigan State University. While studying for this degree, Machiorlatti continued freelance media writing, producing and consulting. She published features and film reviews, produced educational videotapes and served as publicist for an automotive racing team.

While completing her Master of Arts degree, Machiorlatti studied British film in London, England. Upon completion of her Master of Arts degree in American Studies, Machiorlatti took an adjunct teaching position at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, and later enrolled in their Ph.D. program in communication. She received a teaching assistantship for three years and was responsible for facilitating several courses in the Radio/TV/Film area.

Machiorlatti received three Travel/Research Grants to present her work at national conferences, the annual Research Award from the Department of Communication, and a Dissertation Research Grant from the Graduate School and Department of Communication. As a graduate student, Machiorlatti was instrumental in starting the Graduate Student Association of Communication and coordinated the first year of its newsletter publication.

In 1993, Machiorlatti began teaching media studies and video production at the University of Michigan-Flint in their Communication Program as a visiting lecturer.

In 1995-6, Machiorlatti taught media writing, minorities in mass media and a large lecture film history course as an adjunct lecturer at Michigan State University. Machiorlatti continued her work at a video producer and director, completing part one in a four part video installation series titled Wise Woman Wisdom: Circle of Blood. The video has been screened at several national and international conferences and festivals.

Machiorlatti has published several book and video reviews as well as articles on television and film. Currently, Machiorlatti is an assistant professor at The University of Michigan-Flint and is working on a book on feminist film aesthetics.