

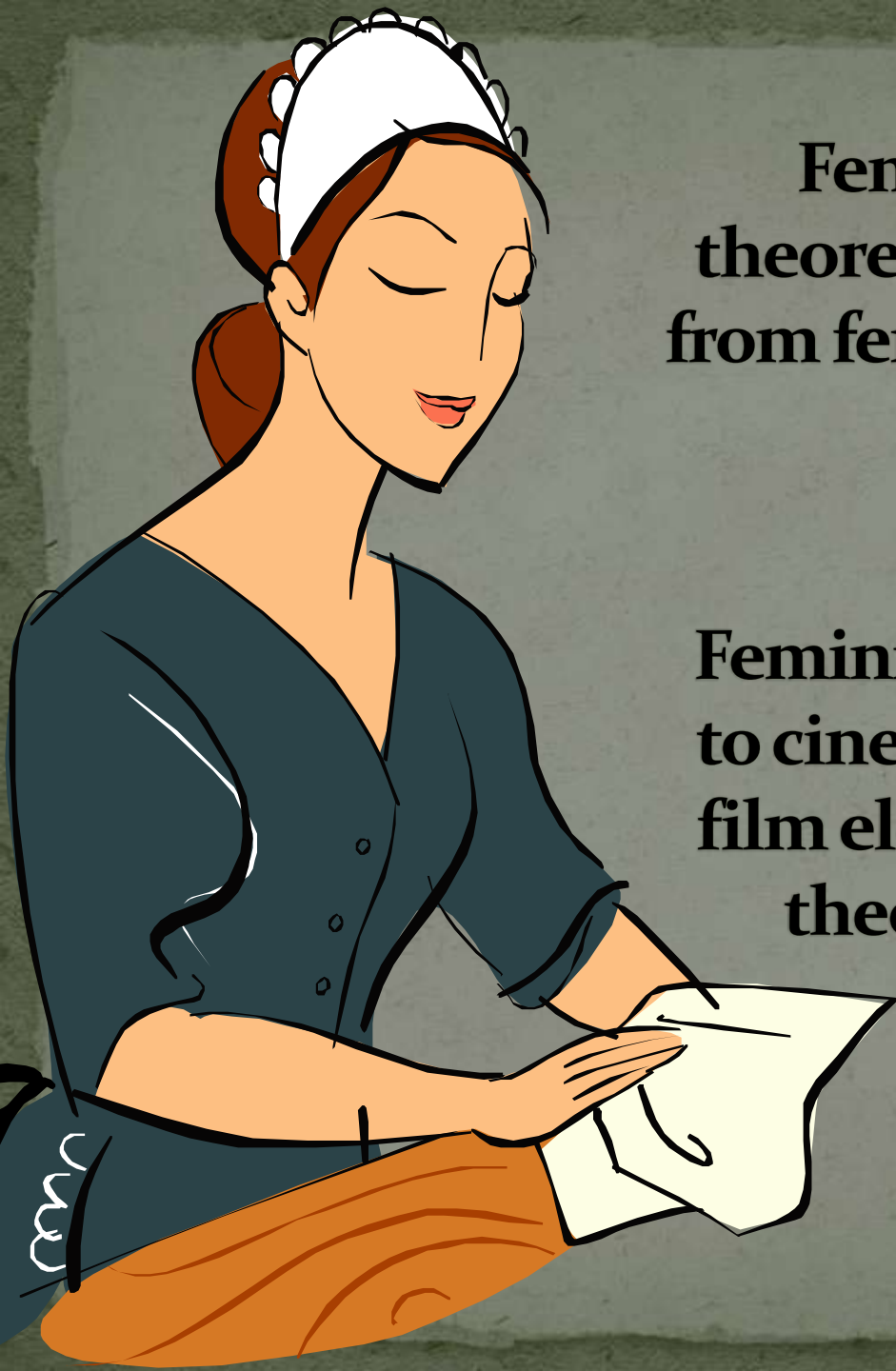
A stylized illustration of a woman with her eyes closed, wearing a white headscarf with a decorative edge and a blue dress with a white collar. She is holding a large, open book. The background is a textured, greyish-green surface.

# Feminism Theory

Monday, September 9, 2013.

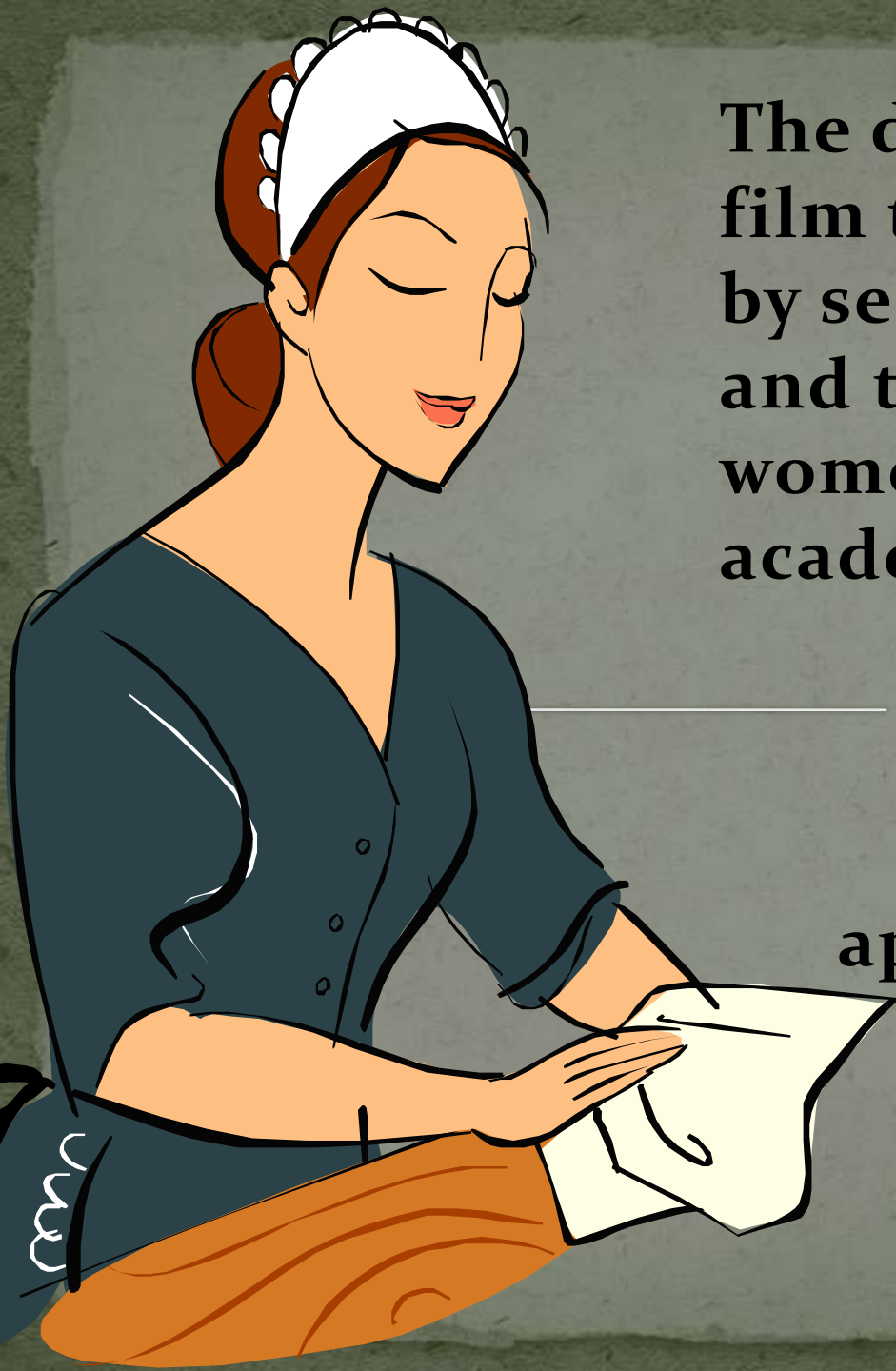
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Presented by:  
Magdalene Uchéh



**Feminist film theory is the theoretical film criticism derived from feminist politics and feminist theory.**

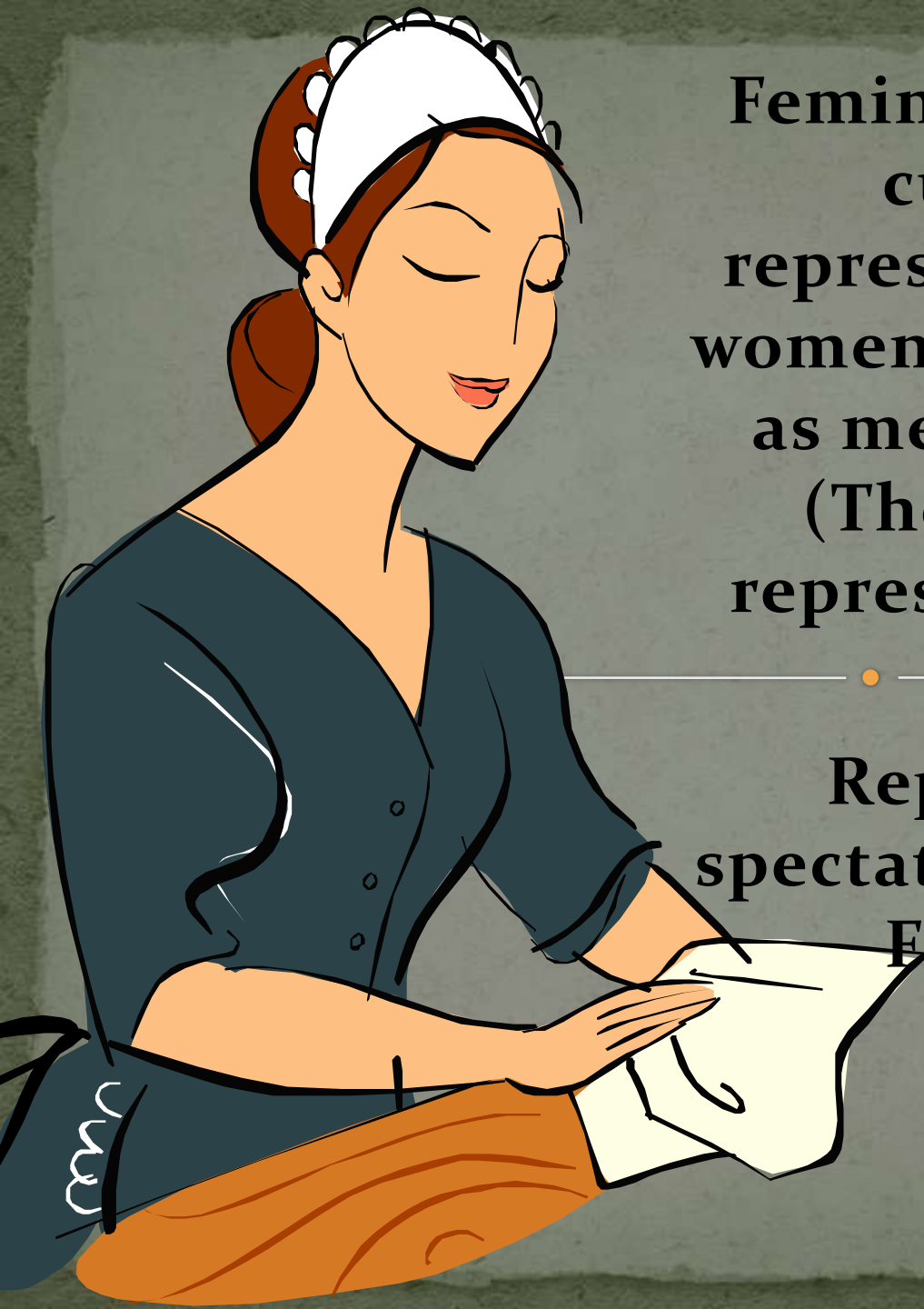
**Feminists have many approaches to cinema analysis, regarding the film elements analysed and their theoretical underpinnings.**



**The development of feminist film theory was influenced by second wave feminism and the development of women's studies within the academy.**

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**Feminist scholars began applying the new theories arising from these movements to analyzing film.**



**Feminist view film to be a cultural practise representing myths about women and femininity as well as men and masculinity. (They see this type of representation as unreal)**

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**Representation and spectatorship are central to Feminist theory.**

# Feminism

➤ Belief in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes.

➤ The movement organized around this belief.


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Feminist Theory is an outgrowth of the general movement to empower women worldwide.

*Feminism can be defined as a recognition and critique of male supremacy combined with efforts to change it.*



# The goals of feminism are:

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- ✓ To demonstrate the importance of women
  - ✓ To reveal that historically women have been subordinate to men
  - ✓ To bring about gender equity.

Simply put:

***Feminists fight for the equality of women and argue that women should share equally in society's opportunities and scarce resources.***

# History

The origins of the feminist movement are found in the abolitionist movement of the 1830's.

Seneca Falls, New York is said to be the birthplace of American feminism.

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*Initial attempts in the United States in the early 1970's were generally based on sociological theory and focused on the function of women characters in particular film narratives or genres and of stereotypes as a reflection of a society's view of women.*



WOMEN  
NEED  
CONSTITUTIONAL  
EQUALITY  
NOW.

FOR WOMEN  
IN  
CONSTITUTIONAL  
EQUALITY

AND  
WOMEN  
CONSTITUTIONAL  
EQUALITY

RIGHTS AND  
7 YEARS  
IN COMMITTEE

THE CALIFORNIA  
SUPPORTS  
EQUAL RIGHTS  
FOR WOMEN  
AMENDMENT



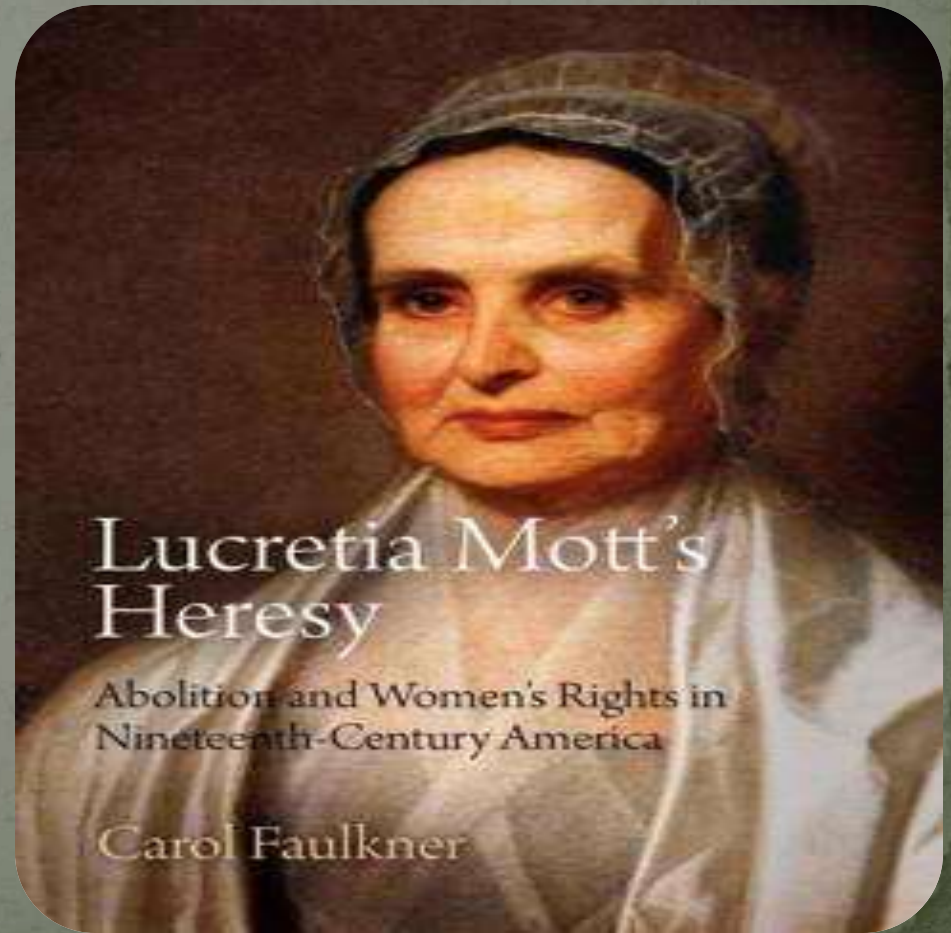
# History

- **Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott** spearheaded the first Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, NY in 1848.
- The convention brought in more than 300 people.
  - The discussion was focused on the social, civil, and religious condition of women.

## The convention lead to the Declaration of Sentiments.

- Modeled after the Declaration of Independence.
- All men and women created equal.
- Spoke of the supremacy of man in regards to divorce and education

- The convention marked a 22 year battle to gain women the right to vote in the United States.
- In 1920 women won the right to vote.



Works such as Marjorie Rosen's *Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies, and the American Dream* (1973) and Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in Movies* (1974) analyzed how the women portrayed in film related to the broader historical context, the stereotypes depicted, the extent to which the women were shown as active or passive, and the amount of screen time given to women.

# The contemporary feminism movement began in the 1960's.

- Free love helped escape the sexual double standard.
- Divorce became commonplace
- Women were “happy housewives” no more
- Higher level employment and fulfillment outside the home were becoming the norm

# Types of Feminism

- ✓ Liberal Feminism
- ✓ Marxist Feminism
- ✓ Radical Feminism
- ✓ Socialist Feminism
- ✓ Post modern Feminism

# Socialist Feminism

- Views women's oppression as stemming from their work in the family and the economy
- Women's inferior position is the result of class-based capitalism
- Socialist believe that history can be made in the private sphere (home) not just the public sphere (work)



# Arguments:

- An increased emphasis on the private sphere and the role of women in the household
- Equal opportunities for women in the public sphere





# Marxist Feminism

(understand the capitalist sources of the oppression of women)

- Division of labor is related to gender role expectations.
- Females give birth. Males left to support family
  - Bourgeoisie=Men
  - Proletariat=Women

**For Marxists, the root cause of all forms of oppression consists in the division of society into classes. For many feminists, on the other hand, the oppression of women is rooted in the nature of men. It is not a social but a biological phenomenon. It is an unhistorical vision of the human condition, from which profoundly pessimistic conclusions must flow.**

**The conclusion must be that the oppression of women by men has always existed and therefore, presumably, will always exist.**

# Radical Feminism

- Male power and privilege is the basis of social relations
- Sexism is the ultimate tool used by men to keep women oppressed
- Women's oppression is the most widespread
- focused on men and patriarchy as the main causes of the oppression of women)

# Radical Feminism

- Women's oppression provides a conceptual model for understanding all other forms of oppression
- Refusing to reproduce is the most effective way to escape the snares
- Speak out against all social structures because they are created by men

# Roots of feminist theory

- Started as a social movement
- Early feminist theory and criticism was directed at the stereotyped representation of women in classic Hollywood film.
- this stereotyped image of women in classic Hollywood had a negative effect on female spectators.
- Therefore, there was a call for a more positive representation of women in Hollywood.

# Film Theory Philosophy

Realism v. Idealism – Idealism – not one reality, but possibly multiples to be discovered

Realism v. Nominalism – Realist – feminist movements and actions to reform are real in their consequences of change

Idealism v. Materialism – Idealism – gaining power and voice through movements

# Relevancy

**Feminism can be defined as a social movement and an ideology in support of the idea that a larger share of scarce resources should be allocated to women.**

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**Feminist believe that women should enjoy the same rights in society as men and that should share equity in society's opportunities.**

- Feminist sociological theory represents an attempt to give a voice to women and female perspective.
- Feminist sociological theory is generally critical of the traditional scientific sociological approach that stresses a commitment to neutrality, objectivity, and empirical research.
- Giving a voice to women remains feminist sociological theory's greatest contribution to the field of sociology specifically and society in general.



# There are many criticisms of feminists.

- ✓ **One** is that they leave themselves wide open to attack because they themselves are very biased in their approach.
- ✓ **Second**, although a commitment to empirical research is not a must in designs of social theory; relying on such techniques as oral testimony and the analysis of such content as diaries risk a lack of objectivity and bias. When an individual is asked for his or her story, it is always biased from his or her perspective.

**Third**, most feminists claim that all sociological theories are gender-biased but fail to provide any proof of this claim.

**Fourth**, gender is just one variable in human interaction. Many feminist believe that interactions are based solely on gender distinction.

**Fifth** criticism of the feminism comes from within feminist sociological theory itself. The fact that there is such a great variety of sociological feminist theories represents a clear lack of consensus among feminists as to the best means to go about fighting sexism, discrimination, and oppression.

**In Classic Hollywood film a drive towards a more positive representation women was not enough.**

**Main Problem:** Classic cinema narrative is constructed by men. Therefore, representing women from a male perspective.

In Classic cinema, the representation of women was how men viewed women.

The representation of women in Classic film is to look Natural, Realistic and Narrative.

Within Classic Film Narrative the following generally takes place:

1. The Male character is established as active and powerful. The story will unfold around him.
2. The Female character is passive and powerless. She is the object of desire for the male character.

\*PLAY CLIP 1 PLS 😊

# The Male Gaze (Male point of view).

1) **Voyeurism:** how we get visual pleasure through looking at (Characters, figures and situations)

- **Camera:** physically shoots from the male Characters point of view.
- **Characters:** male character is viewing and gazing at the women.
- **Spectator:** you are made to identify with the male characters and simple view the women as a spectacle.

2) **Narcissistic:** visual pleasure derives from the spectators self-identification with the characters and environments.

Hollywood is tailor made for male desire

# THEORIES

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# FREUDIAN PSYCHOSEXUAL THEORY

The feminist model of film analysis initially appeared in the U.S. during the 1960's, as the Women's Liberation movement first gained prominence.

At that point, the theory employed a sociological approach; that is, a particular film analyzed from a feminist perspective was studied in terms of the era in which it was made and, if it was a period piece, the time frame in which it was set.

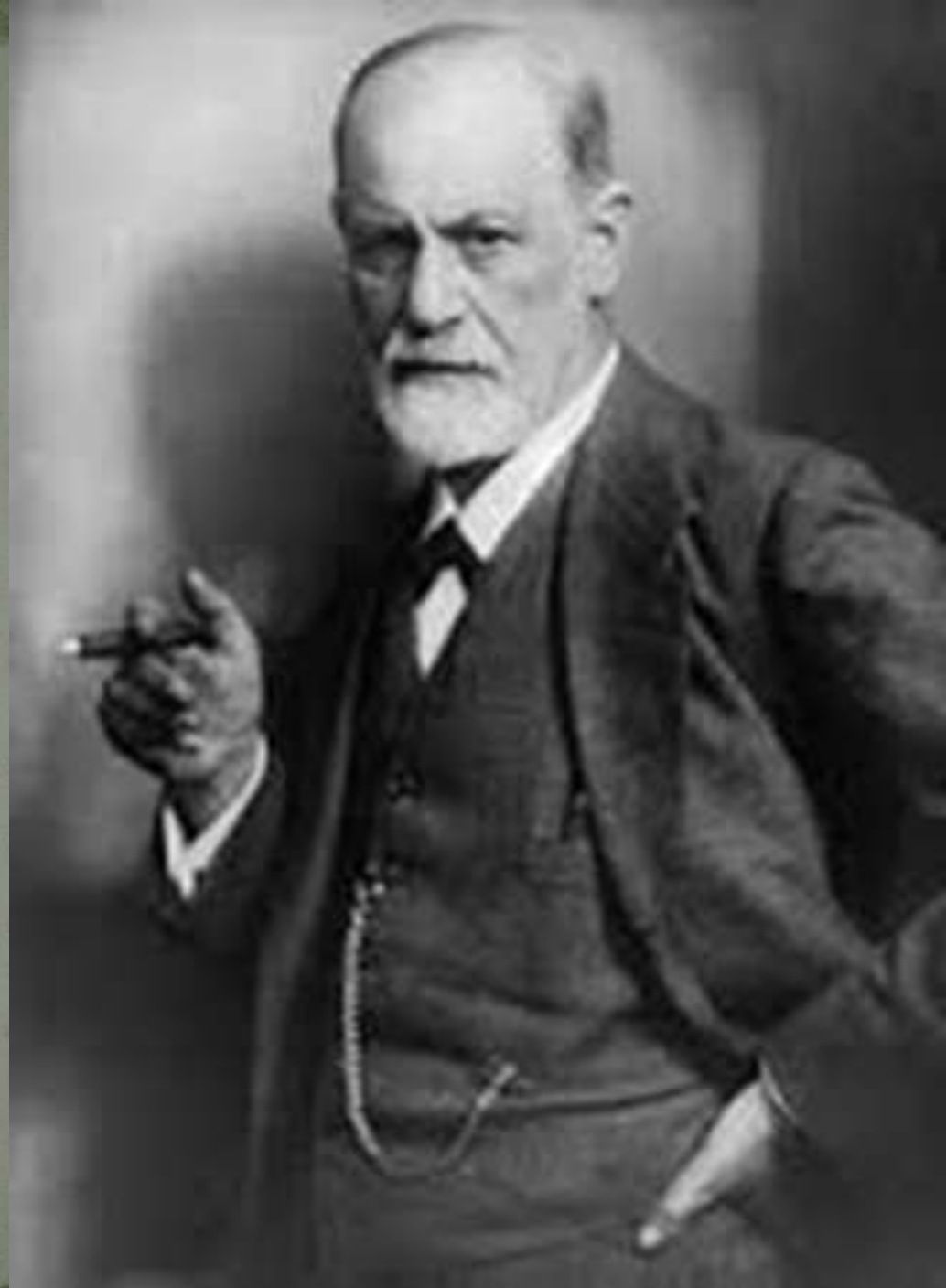
Later feminist film analysts began to deconstruct movies by employing Freudian psychoanalytic and psychosexual theories.

This does not mean scholars have embraced Freudian ideas; rather, feminist film theorists have recognized how Freud's highly sexist ideas have permeated and been accepted by American society.

This was (and still is) particularly true of Hollywood, which has always been run by a "good ol' boy" network.

Freud, was a Viennese doctor and the first psychoanalytic theorist. He came up with a comprehensive personality theory, including a psychosexual analysis:

According to Freud, all human personality is biologically based, and everyone passes through a series of biological stages:



**Stage One** is the **ORAL STAGE**, which lasts from birth till about 1-2 years of age. The central issue during this stage is oral gratification.

**Stage Two** is the **ANAL STAGE**, from 1-2 till about 3-4 years of age. The central focus at this point is waste elimination and control, with a child concerned with controlling him/herself (being retentive/letting go).

**The third phase** is the **PHALLIC STAGE**, from age four till around six years. This is the stage feminist film theorists tend to focus on, because this is when there is the first differentiation between genders.

Thus, in Freud's view, females should never hold positions of control and power. In other words, this psychosexual theory upholds the views of the typical patriarchal society: that men are superior to women and should be the ones in charge.

Feminist film scholars obviously take issue with the notion, inferred from Freud's theory, that females, given their biological "inadequacy," should not be in positions of power.

If women do try to compete with men, it's perceived as a threat by the patriarchy because the women are not only out to gain power for themselves, but they want to usurp power from males, thereby "castrating" them.

**Freud's view of females is manifest in movies where women who assume positions of power, e.g., become sexually aggressive or desirous of a career, are punished for stepping outside the boundaries established by the ruling patriarchy; that is, the pigeonholes of faithful wife/caregiving mother/virginal, dutiful daughter.**



WHO IS SALT?

ANGELINA JOLIE

SALT



LARA CROFT  
TOMB  
RAIDER

IN THEATRES JUNE 15  
TOMBRAIDERMOVIE.COM



KATE BECKINSALE

AN IMMORTAL BATTLE  
FOR SUPREMACY.

UNDERWORLD

# SCOPOPHILIA THEORY

**“Scopophilia, a drive which has the look as its object of desire, is evidently of crucial importance to the cinema. It is a drive that is dependent upon the maintenance of a distance between subject and object.” --  
Stephen Neale**





**According to film theorist Laura Mulvey, popular movies are phallogocentric; that is, constructed for male viewing pleasure.**

**This means that films are scopophilic in nature, with women as passive objects meant to satisfy the active male desire to gaze at the female form.**

**This is referred to as the male gaze, and it is accomplished in the cinema in three distinct ways:**

- 1.) Females within the narrative who are shown looking at (and usually lusting after) female characters;
- 2.) Through the lens of the movie camera, which lingers on a woman in scopophilic fashion;
- 3.) Through the eyes of (heterosexual) males in the viewing audience who are invited to stare at an attractive woman on the screen and live out their fantasies through her

All three methods of the male gaze objectify a woman, turning her into a commodity on display, instead of recognizing her as an equal human being. In this way, she loses her basic humanity.



Rita Hayworth, the seductive femme fatale is captured by the camera in a series of close-ups as she's sunbathing on her husband's yacht, singing as if she were a mythic siren luring men to her side (and their deaths).

Indeed, we see the hero watching her, unable to resist her, and another man lasciviously ogling her through the lens of a telescope. Of course, the straight men in the audience are also meant to be captivated by her beauty. Thus, she's presented as a sex object, not as a person.

**Marilyn Monroe  
In Seven Year Itch**



The Seven Year Itch where Marilyn Monroe, wearing a seductive white chiffon dress, stands over a subway grate, her skirt catching a breeze and blowing up around her waist.

RICHARD GERE  
JULIA ROBERTS

PRETTY

*She walked off the street,  
into his life  
and stole his heart.*

WOMAN

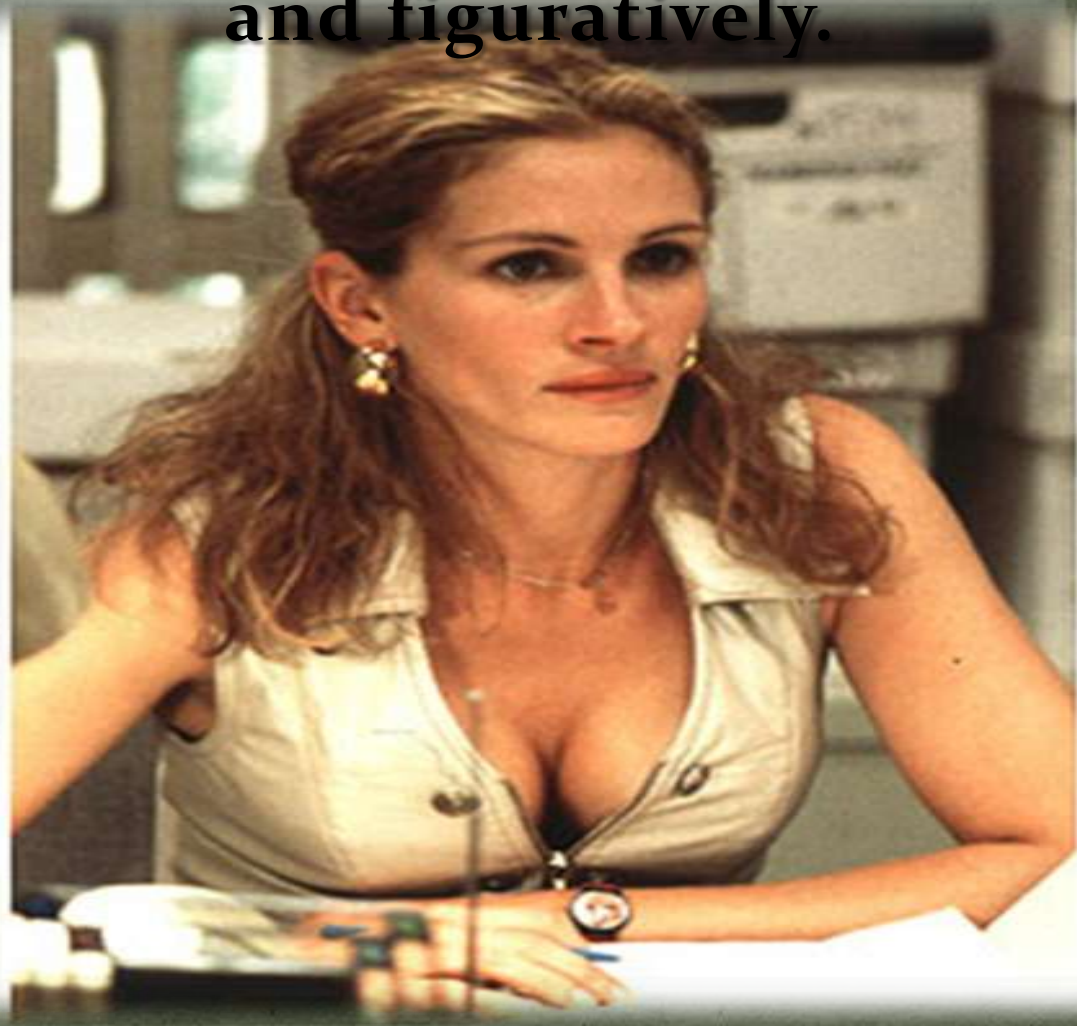


The camera focuses only a series of female body parts – a long pair of legs, the curve of a waist, and shapely breasts (in a lacy bra), taking its time to finally reveal the film's star, Julia Roberts



Again, we have a filmic female depicted as a mere commodity, both literally (she's hooker) and figuratively.

Juliet Roberts  
in  
Erin Brockovich



**The signs in the Hollywood film convey the patriarchal ideology that underlies our social structure and that constructs women in very specific ways -- ways that reflect patriarchal needs -- the patriarchal unconscious.”**

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**Men don't simply look at women: rather, their gaze carries power of action and possession. The sexualization and objectification of women is not just for purpose of eroticism, but it is designed to annihilate the threat that females pose.**

Mainstream Hollywood films can be analyzed and criticized for being pro-patriarchy, usually through by applying psychoanalytic theory. This is often referred to as "reading (them) against the grain."

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Patriarchal myths function to position women as silent, absent and marginal.



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