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On gendered knowledge in communication: women in the film industry

Michèle Martin

Introduction

Studies in communication have shown that, in the film industry, women as directors obtain less financial support than men. They find themselves in a peculiar situation: the discrimination they suffer obliges them to innovate, and hence they often find themselves at the 'avant garde' of cinematographic production. This is specifically true in the area of documentary film-making. To use Carle's words, in film 'the revolution passes through women' (1990: 101).

Is women's production too innovative to be acknowledged in the dominant discourse? Or is it that women's knowledge in that production, 'an improbable mixture of total sincerity, soft aggressiveness and regained emotions' (Carle 1990:101), is so different from that of men in position of power in the film industry that the latter cannot understand it? Whatever the answer to these questions, women film-makers' production is rarely vested with the authority that would facilitate the development of a career. Even in the mid 1990s, this lack of recognition is still remarkable.

This paper is an exploratory investigation of women's knowledge in the film industry. As such, its purpose is rather to raise rarely asked questions about the place of women in the industry than it is to answer them. My exploration of the issue is enlightened by a discussion of Foucault's (1972, 1980) notion of knowledge in relation to power, of Code's (1991) analysis of knowledge in relation to gender, and by a review of some of the issues in the debate over women, culture and communication. I turn finally to an empirical examination of the case of women as film directors,¹ through a review of secondary sources such as books written on the issue and art critiques in newspapers. This examination is by no means thorough, but should rather be seen as a point of departure for deeper and more extensive empirical studies on this issue.

What knowledge?

According to Foucault (1972), there is knowledge when 'a group of elements [is] formed in a regular manner by a discursive practice'. These elements must be related in some ways and linked through some statements in which some of them will be given more importance than others, either to stress a particular point or because some concepts are closer to one's position than others. Knowledge, then, exists as a 'field of coordination, subordination of statements in which concepts appear, and are defined, applied and transformed'. It is 'the space in which one subject may take up a position' and explain the elements used in one's discourse. However, knowledge constituted by the coordination of such elements and concepts may or may not acquire a scientific status' (1972: 182-3).

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1992), Foucault distinguishes between two types of knowledge: 'connaissance' and 'savoir'. 'Connaissance' is identified as scientific knowledge, subjected to specific rules determined by a particular discipline or field. 'Savoir' is not necessarily subjected to formal rules, but represents the necessary

1. In my paper, I use indiscriminately the words directors and filmmakers for the same occupation although, in some studies, the notion of filmmakers may have a wider connotation than film directors. My understanding of those two notions here, is that suggested by the National Film Board in Canada, namely 'a person who generates ideas for films and other types of audiovisual material, directs their production and helps to promote them (in *Foundation for Toronto Women in Film and Video* 1991: 157)'.

conditions, in a particular period, for an element or an enunciation to become 'connaissance'. It is acquired either in formal institutions (schools, church, etc.) or more spontaneously in daily experiences. It may be constituted in the form of a general statement or in more precise forms of expertise. In this paper, I discuss knowledge in the sense of 'savoir'. So the meaning of knowledge here rests on concepts associated with social practices rather than with science, and with women's practices in the domain of communication and culture.

As such, I do not consider knowledge as a fixed concept of the dominant scientific discourse, defined once and for all, but as something that fluctuates, that undergoes 'displacements and transformations' in history, to use Foucault's words. Knowledge, then, consists of a group of concepts which may be understood differently according to the perspective (macroscopic vis-à-vis microscopic) from which one looks at them, or to the development of a particular field or discipline which may influence the way they are connected and organized into a hierarchy. In other words, the historical perspective adopted to link concepts and elements influences the way in which a society is conceptualized and reconceptualized. History involves discontinuities not always acknowledged (and sometimes deliberately omitted for different reasons) by historians or practitioners. The effect is the production of partial knowledge which may help to promote the empowerment of some social groups to the detriment of others. As such, knowledge is related to power.

Knowledge and power

Like Foucault, I believe 'that power is neither given, nor exchanged, nor recovered, but rather exercised, and that it only exists in action' (1980:89). Thereby, the questions arising are: What sort of 'exercise' does power involve? Through what mechanisms is it exercised? To study mechanisms of power and their relation to knowledge, Foucault suggests that we look at the way that knowledge leads to power and that power influences knowledge, since the exercise of power itself causes the emergence of new objects of knowledge and the accumulation of bodies of information which, in turn, may change the way power is exercised.

How do mechanisms of power come to be accepted or rejected? Part of the reason for their acceptance is that they are rarely in the form of crude coercion and repression but rather are parts and effects of social, political and cultural conditions acting as a force which 'traverses and produces things, ...induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse'. As Foucault points out, power 'needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression' (1980:119). It is not to be 'identified with an individual who possesses and exercises it by right', but rather as 'a machinery that no one owns' (1980:156).

Mechanisms of power often take the form of types of knowledge imposed on a group of people by another. The imposition of a certain type of knowledge entails the omission of others. Why are some types of knowledge dismissed while others are seen as universal truth? Knowers have identities and characteristics that have emerged from the relations of power which have influenced their conditions of life and work. Different types of knowledge are produced and hierarchized within these conditions. Hence, such characteristics as social class, culture, race, age and gender influence the specificity of the politics of truth in bourgeois society. Groups of knowers living within specific social conditions establish a system of rules orienting the production, distribution and circulation of different types of knowledge which they may find more productive than others. These groups are part of the systems of power which produce and maintain 'truth' and which are reproduced by it. Thus, there is an administration of knowledge as

truth, a politics of knowledge and relations of power created by knowledge. If these are studied in terms of location, implantation, displacement and transposition, they may unveil the mechanisms through which knowledge functions as a form of power and through which various types of knowledge are subjugated to silence and disqualification by dominant knowers.

Indeed, different types of knowledge have been disqualified in our society. 'Naive' knowledge, 'subjective' knowledge, 'popular' knowledge have been located below what is considered as objective, scientific, universal knowledge in the social hierarchy. In other words, 'non-scientific' ways of knowing have been often dismissed to give place to the 'universal truth' of science, the truth of those in positions of power. It is among the former ways of knowing that women's knowledge is generally located. To counter this partial understanding of knowledge, we must avoid 'reduc[ing] others to silence, by claiming that what they say is worthless' (1972:17).

Gendered knowledge

In dominant discourse, it is a self-evident principle that truth and knowledge, once discerned and established, acquire the status of objective, a historical, neutral and universal, a status recognized by the 'experts'. This principle of objectivity and universality is at the basis of the significance of scientific knowledge and professional expertise. It is used to establish the credibility and authority of different types of knowledge. Credibility and authority are at the core of the relationship between power and knowledge; they are central to the place given to different types of knowledge in the social hierarchy of knowledge. Yet, Code asserts that pure objectivity is an impossible aim in scientific research, and the subjectivity and the specificities of the knower 'can and must be accorded central epistemological significance' (1991: 4). This is all the more important in feminist research, since women as social knowers are disqualified in the fullest sense of that term, because female knowledge is considered to be subjective and particular. This disqualification, however, operates differently according to a woman's class, race, age and culture, and is not always or wholly conscious. It is part of the 'machinery' of power and takes the form of a 'network of sociopolitical relationships and intellectual assumptions [which] creates an invisible system of acceptance and rejection, discourse and silence, ascendancy and subjugation' (1991: 25) within and around various fields of intellectual and cultural activities.

This exclusion of women as knowers has led, according to Code (1991), to the creation of feminist approaches which attempt to rehabilitate 'non-scientific' ways of knowing. One is based on the idea that women should create their own models of scientific knowledge because there is a distinctive feminist way of knowing which has not been acknowledged by dominant theories. The other approach suggests that women should use the already existing models of science and adjust them to their own ways of knowing, showing their strengths and their shortcomings. Both approaches present male power as a unified hegemony and female repression as a single, unique position. This has the effect of giving an essential characteristic to the concepts of women and men, and to dismissing the fact that masculinity and femininity vary according to class, race, age, culture, etc. This way of presenting male power and female repression negates the specificities of the knowers, the fact that there is an interplay of subjective and objective factors in the establishment of knowledge. It also encourages the use of such dichotomies as objective/subjective, male/female, scientific/popular, theory/practice, reason/emotion, universal/particular, mind/body, abstract/concrete, with the first term of each attributed to men and the other to women. These dichotomies invariably lead to the creation of a hierarchy of types of knowledge, the very characteristics of dominant thought. As Code points out, studies of women's oppression 'need to be wary lest they replicate the very structures they deplore' (1991: 20).

Types of knowledge

Dichotomies are problematic since they necessarily posit the exclusion of nuanced positions and fluctuations in knowledge. Yet, in the areas of truth and knowledge, things are rarely so clearly distinguished, since knowledge is 'a product of an intermingling of subjective and objective elements' (Code 1991: 30). Though some forms of knowledge are more purely objective and others more purely subjective, there exist other types of knowledge along the continuum relating these two more or less extreme forms. But even in the creation of more purely objective knowledge, 'objectivity requires taking subjectivity into account' (1991:31), subjective elements that stem from the knowers' historical locations. Their locations in history are constitutive of what and how they can know.

The essentialist approach erases differences among women and men due to elements linked to the historical and social contexts. Affectivity – personal commitment, interests or desires – and creativity are seen as elements of subjectivity influencing the types of knowledge produced by all women, while all men are seen as having the characteristics of Man from dominant groups. Yet, men's supremacy and dominance takes various forms according to the class, race, culture and society to which they belong. For instance, knowers from the dominant class select and discriminate certain elements of knowledge on which they impose a specific structure and a certain unity. Knowledge is then the product of a complex accumulation of political conceptual factors. As women have been subjugated politically, they have been qualified as ignorant, and their types of knowledge have been dismissed as worthless.

The objectivity/subjectivity dichotomy creates gender specific experiences, and emphasizes the fact that the sex of the knower is significant. In patriarchal society, this dichotomy has legitimated ways of knowing favoured by men in positions of power, while discredited ways of knowing common to other groups in society, including women. This dichotomy is a manifestation of 'a "sex/gender system" that structures all the other inequalities of western social arrangements and informs even those areas of life – such as "objective knowledge" – that might seem to be gender-free' (1991:67). This system, however, takes divergent forms and adopts different mechanisms according to economic, racial, religious, class and cultural elements, as knowledge 'is rooted in and shaped by, specific interests and social arrangements (1991: 68).' Hence, gender politics orient the definition of what is to be considered as knowledge, and deny authoritative status to women's knowledge, failing to recognize it as knowledge because it grows out of experiences and practices, frequent contacts with material and sensory objects. As Code points out, 'for a system that enshrines male subjectivity in the name of objectivity, while suppressing the products of female subjectivity with the accusation that they lack objectivity, knowledge of these kinds can count only as women's lores (1991: 69).'

Academic researchers sometimes promote these discriminations. Some feminist studies reinforce these inequalities by assuming a sharp difference between male and female knowledges, or by reifying technology. Some of these studies are in culture and mass communication.

Some feminist studies in culture

Feminist studies in culture generally agree that women's knowledge diverges from men's, and that its dismissal was primarily due to men's rigid and fixed notion of knowledge. Yet, women have their own culture, according to Lafontaine (1987), a culture of individual resistance to proscribed norms, which does not necessarily become collective resistance, but which has some effect on the dominant culture. Individual interventions gradually bring about a feminine culture in the form of 'a set of desires revealing... a certain representation of women, a way of life which had been dismissed, but are now revalued' (Chombart de Lauwe 1987: 54). This type of cultural knowledge

contrasts with a dominant culture based on exclusively masculine events (wars, power, etc.) (Michel 1987).

Still, female knowledge in culture remains difficult to identify, says Collin (1987), because it is defined in relation to male knowledge, since women have to use a language created by dominant male groups to communicate. Women's access to knowledge is thus a form of liberation at the same time as it is 'a thickening of the veil that separates women from themselves.' Since women use concepts defined and assessed by men, their knowledge always reflects a point of view which is not theirs in a culture which is not theirs. 'Truth increases the untruth of her point of view' (1987: 108). Collin however admits that a 'pure' feminine culture cannot and should not exist. To separate it from masculine culture would be 'to reduce it to a moribund state' (1987: 112). Yet, male knowledge remains the dominant knowledge, that of power, while women's knowledge is kept in a state of marginality and dependence. What are the social mechanisms allowing unequal positions to male and female knowledges in culture?

According to Smith (1989), women's situation is only one case among many of cultural marginalization. Dominant culture is not the making of people generally, but the product of the dominant classes. Cultural creations, images, ideas do not emerge from the spontaneous production of people's various daily cultural experiences, but are produced by specialists, experts in culture, who have powerful positions in ideological, cultural institutions and industry. In capitalist society, culture is made for profit, and is regulated and controlled to sustain and maintain this economic process. Hence, images and thoughts communicated to us through media or otherwise, and which we use to think and talk about ourselves are not only the product of male knowledge, as Collin points out, but emerge from men in positions of dominance. The institutional structures sustaining these activities and the means they offer to perform them have been produced by men for women and not by women (Smith, 1989). Thus, the perspectives, concerns and interests of one class, one sex, and one race, expressed in patriarchal culture and presented as natural, obvious and general, dismiss or compartmentalize other forms of creation. Smith's apparent homogenization of female oppression is tempered by her assertion that it does not originate from a bias against women (or against working classes or other races), or even from negative stereotypes, but from '[t]he exclusion of women from participating in creating the culture of the society', an exclusion 'largely organized by the ordinary social processes of socialization, education, work and communication' (1989: 10).

This supports Code's assertion that women's exclusion from participating in dominant cultural and intellectual activities is due to complex patterns of knowledge created by institutions which reinforce and legitimize the network of authority and expertise maintaining asymmetrical, discriminating social and institutional power structures. The division of intellectual labour presented as essential for the functioning of bourgeois society maintains patterns of privilege disempowering women and men. Women's disempowerment by structures of authority crosses the lines of class, race, age or culture.

The intransigence of the institutionalized structures of power/ knowledge... blocks women's access to the authority they require to take responsibility... and to achieve the level of cognitive and moral autonomy that is crucial to their social empowerment (1991: 177).

Women find themselves in a position of vulnerability since they have to trust men to evaluate their knowledge. **In principle**, every way of thinking, creativity and intervention is equally open to men and women, **but practically**, power structures, based on an essentialist conception of women, deny credibility to their cultural projects and creations.

In such a male oriented social organization of knowledge based on power relations among women and men, women's creative work is generally devalued. According to the

novelist Tillie Olsen, when a book provokes an injurious reaction, it is not because of 'its quality or content, but on the basis of its having been written by a woman, with consequent misreading, mistreatment' (quoted in Smith 1989: 16). Although Tillie's position is extreme and reflects the lack of subtlety often associated with the dominant discourse, the fact is that women are excluded from the position of dominance in cultural institutions. In consequence, their production may not always be granted the recognition that is deserves in the dominant culture nor be acknowledged by its experts. Hence, it has to be presented in marginalized places such as women's film festivals, women's sections in book stores, women's book exhibitions, etc. in order to be made public knowledge. Women's exclusion is also part of the communication industry.

Gendered knowledge and communication technologies

In the domain of communication, women's knowledge and cultural creations are closely related to technologies of communication. Various feminist points of view exist to explain the relationship between women and technologies. These studies often propose an explanation which suggests the homogenization of female oppression and blames it on technological features. Some (e.g. Cockburn, 1986) assert that technology in bourgeois society is entirely controlled by men, which places women in a position of subordination and subjection in relation to technological uses. Others (e.g. Rothschild, 1983) suggest that since technology is controlled by men, it necessarily bears male values, and prizes aggressiveness and anti-humanism. They claim that should women develop them, they would build them on values favouring sensitivity, liberation, etc. Some (e.g. Stanley 1983) believe that women have historically created technologies but were not recognized for their work because most of these technologies were in the domestic sphere. Still others (e.g. Purnis as cited in Rakow, 1983) assert that technology has a role in the construction of gender because it organizes social relations and experiences and influences the organisation of space and time (in Rakow, 1988). Finally, some (e.g. Rakow, 1988) assert that technologies do 'not only describe but ascribe' women (1988:67). They are gendered because they have been conceptualized by men to use in specific forms of social relations and practices.

All these positions represent more or less deterministic approaches in which the technology is given a power which should rather be attributed to social relations. To say, as Rakow does, that technology ascribes specific uses to women, for example, is to dismiss the fact that women of different classes have divergent access to a technology. Bourgeois women may never come in contact with a domestic technology used by women from the working classes for instance. But, Rakow's article is useful in other ways – in discussing how technology is related to gendered practices in society –, and she admits that we know too little about communication technologies to assert whether they alter or inherit power relations in bourgeois society, and enhance or diminish women's repression.

My own study on women and communication technologies shows that although these are not neutral, the relations of power in bourgeois society should be traced to the developers and users rather than to the technological elements. Private and public interests involved in the development and use of a technology and related to economic, political and ideological elements of the social organization within which it is distributed are the forces orienting access to, and control and use of, a technology. I believe that discrimination against women in relation to communication technology is not inscribed in the artefact, that women's repression is not ascribed in the design of the technology itself, but in its control by certain social groups, in their level of access and types of use.²

As well, discrimination against women in the labour process is more likely to be bound to the relations of power in the organization where a technology is used than to the technology itself. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the technical features have

2. For more information on this issue, see Martin (1991).

no limiting effect. The example of women working in the telecommunication and media industries supports these assumptions. Women's knowledge was not given the same credit in the privacy of the telephone operating labour process as in the very public work of radio broadcasters. The reason for such unequal access to these two different technologies were to be found at different levels of analysis.

Among them, the private versus public use of women's knowledge was an important element. With such a means of communication as the telephone, where women's knowledge could only be used privately, the economic aspect had priority. The case of radio broadcasters was different as it involved the public use of women's knowledge on mass communication technology. The control of educated women talking in public was problematic. The radio gave them the opportunity to express political views supporting issues which could contradict the dominant ideology. It might also have invested their knowledge with an authority until then exclusive to men. So, while male administrators' concern was mostly economic in the privacy of the telephone operating labour process, it became more political when related to a mass communication technology. This shows that the oppression of women's knowledge in mass communication may be linked to various elements which are not always directly related to the technical elements.³ This issue is also multi-faceted in the film industry.

3. For more information on this particular issue, see Martin (1989).

The eclipsing of women's knowledge as film directors

The camera hardly appears as a gendered technology. Yet, Rakow asserts that the camera ascribes men and women in gendered practices, as women are usually positioned before the camera while men are behind, operating it. No one can deny that practices in photographing are gendered, but I would say that the camera itself has little to do with it. If women generally found themselves before the camera, it seems to me that it is not because the technology is gendered, but rather because, in bourgeois society, women are often identified as objects and men as subjects with technical skills. This kind of sexual discrimination finds itself in the film industry as well.

Studies (e.g. Lamartine, 1985; Lejeune, 1989) have shown that, historically, women's knowledge in the film industry has been, if not completely dismissed, given little credit, by historians and critics. In France, where Lumière invented the technology of film-making in 1895, and was the first to shoot short sequences on film, some of the most prominent historians of cinema (e.g. Georges Sadoul, Jean Mitry) ignored women's film creations or gave credit for them to their male assistants. Mitry says about the films made by Alice Guy, who is now recognized as the first film director: '... these minor comedies whose technique was very rudimentary, could not be compared to Méliès' films,⁴ even the most mediocre' (in Lamartine, 1985: 26). A male objective knower had readily dismissed female film-making.

4. Thanks to Sadoul who always refused to credit Guy with the first film direction, Méliès was recognized as the first film director for years.

In the past, when historians gave credit to women's work, or were sympathetic to women directors (Charles Ford), they often adopted sexist attitudes and used a condescending, reductionist and paternalistic tone, more insulting than gratifying (Lamartine, 1985, Lejeune, 1989). But then, these historians were partly reproducing what they found in catalogues listing historical productions of films and their directors. These catalogues rarely gave credit to women for the films they directed, and when they did, women were often misidentified by being subsumed under their husband's name or work. A large part of women's work as film directors was then dismissed. Even if the husband did not organize, or even desire, that eclipsing, Lamartine says, historians, critics and catalogue makers ensure respect for the male order by failing to acknowledge women's creations and knowledge (1985: 31). This is particularly important since catalogues and statistical and scientific reports represent the official knowledge in a domain and, as such, are regularly used to justify some policies and regulations governing that domain. Clearly, such documents are often the source of production of partial knowledge.

Not before the early 1970s were women's creations given proper recognition, when their contribution was finally established by Francis Lacassin (1972) after thorough research on women directors. According to Lacassin, French and American writers had wiped Madame Guy's films out. He and other historians like Nicole-Lise Bernheim (1976) were among the first to give credit to women pioneers in film direction like Alice Guy and Germaine Dulac.

Discrimination against women film directors is not a thing of the past. In French speaking countries such as France, Belgium and Switzerland, women directors are reported as representing only six per cent of the total number of directors (Lejeune, 1989). In Canada, a recent inquiry shows that, in the private sector, only sixteen per cent of the directors of feature films are women, and 30.9 per cent of those for short and medium films (Soucy, 1990: 43). At the National Film Board (NFB),⁵ a Canadian federal state agency where a large number of film directors acquire their experience, some of them spending their whole career in that institution, women are still in the minority as film directors. They represent 34 per cent of the continuing film directors (a secure position) while they constitute 63 per cent of term directors (an insecure position). Only 22 per cent of the largest grants distributed in 1986-87 were awarded to women, while all those under \$20,000 were attributed to men directors. Yet, women's creations were proportionately over-represented as recipients of awards: 25 per cent of GENIES (Academy Canadian Cinema and television); 25 per cent of GEMINIS and 27 per cent of GEMEAUX went to women's films. (Foundation of Toronto Women in Film and Video (FWFV) 1990). So it seems that women receive some recognition from the professional associations. Nonetheless, this does not seem to vest them with the authority necessary to find funding. This is an interesting paradox which should be explored at greater length. What makes women's knowledge recognized by juries awarding prizes and not by juries granting funding? Politics of knowledge does not seem to translate into economics of knowledge.

Why the discrepancy then? Why do women directors have so much difficulty in gaining the necessary authority to obtain decent funding from the producers, including the NFB? I suggest that the answer to these questions is twofold: dominant producers seem to be unable to understand, and then to authorize, women's types of knowledge; and, as a corollary, women's position in the power structure of the industry remains, in spite of their relative successes, at the bottom of the hierarchy. These elements can be observed in the relationship between film 'experts' (e.g. critics, producers, administrators) and women directors' knowledge.

Feminine or feminist knowledge in cinema?

I have previously discussed different types of knowledge arising from the relationship between the notions of objectivity and subjectivity used in the dominant discourse. Using Code's conception of gendered knowledge, I have shown that dichotomous categorizations of knowledge block our capacity to understand society. Knowledge forms are continuous; we have to consider various types of knowledge, more or less objective and more or less subjective. Further, pure objective knowledge is an ideal more than a reality, as the knower always has to interpret the objective elements of knowledge through his or her subjective characteristics. Yet, it is often in the name of that knowledge that decisions are made, politics developed, funding allotted and film criticism written by 'experts' in the film industry. Before I discuss the relationship between male experts and female film-makers, I would like to examine briefly the different types of knowledge that can be identified among films made by women.

A survey of some literature on women's film-making (e.g. Collectif 1990; Lamartine, 1985; Lejeune, 1989; Miller, 1988) suggests that, while there are generally some clear distinctions between films made by men and by women, those created by women do not altogether constitute an homogeneous category.⁶ Indeed, some films made by women are

5. The NFB distributes most government grants, other money coming from the private industry.

6. As Astrid Berrier, professor in linguistics and occasional film critic, remarked during one of our discussions on this paper, films made by Diane Kurys, for instance, cannot be classified in the same category as those made by Anne-Claire Poirier.

as distinctive from other women's films as from men's. At the same time, women's creations entail some common characteristics. At a general level, the literature surveyed suggests that women's knowledge as film directors is about human conditions of people, more often women's living conditions, while men's knowledge is about the Human Condition. Since women's films then take their distance from the great formalist characters of popular cinema, they may be characterized as subjective as opposed to men's objective products.

From that survey and based on this theoretical discussion, women's films, despite their common characteristics, can be tentatively classified into four ideological streams of creativity: dominant stream, feminist stream, feminine stream and politicized stream. It is important here to stress that although some female film directors may be identified with one stream, others may fit into more than one, either because their knowledge has evolved along with their creations, or because they happen to make different types of movies. Despite this important nuance, and because this article is primarily a theoretical discussion on women's knowledge in the film industry based on secondary sources, I describe only briefly the four categories, which are useful to understand the discussion on the relationship between experts and women film-makers that follows. In a study based on primary sources, it might be more appropriate to use the classification on the movies rather than on the film directors, the four streams remaining the same nonetheless.

The dominant stream is that of the female film directors who want to 'play in the boys' team' (Lamartine, 1985: 144). They use male knowledge, and do not question the misogyny of the characters or the sexism of the stereotypes at the core of their creations. The theme they exploit is supposed to reach a level of universality and objectivity that transcends realistic and empiricist qualifications. The feminist stream is at the opposite end of the dominant stream: women's knowledge here intends to be militant. Lamartine compares its effect to that of 'a bomb in the quiet garden of privileged males' (Lamartine, 1985: 139). Feminist knowers' movies are always disturbing because they throw women's most important problems in the face of the viewers, clearly identifying the culprit. The themes treated are life experiences specific to women, presented as a form of knowledge that transcends the specificity of an issue and takes a universal character, as objective knowledge, in order to gain authority in the world of dominant cinema. For instance, they exploit the theme 'the personal is political' and present it as universal, transforming what is considered as subjective knowledge in the dominant discourse into objective truth.

The feminine stream consists also of women's knowledge about other women, but without any preoccupation with political or militant intervention. This is a pro-women cinema in which women's roles are integrated as subjects, no matter the issue debated in the film. Their knowledge is not about women's struggle, but about daily activities that they know well, or that are more specifically concerned with women. These creations, based on limited and well defined experiences, are identified in the dominant discourse as subjective knowledge. Finally, the politicized stream consists of women's knowledge that is not particularly related to women's issues, but rather to wider political issues exploited from a woman's point of view. The films that fit here denounce situations of political and economic oppression of people in their countries or their particular ethnic or racial groups, giving important roles to women as well as to men. But, instead of using wars and struggles over power among various social groups to exploit the theme as men do, they show the daily struggles of ordinary people.

Struggling for authority more than for credit

We have seen that historians did not give much credit to women film directors in the early period of the cinema industry, but that, since the early 1970s, some of them are giving women their due for the work they have done. It seems, then, that the lack of

recognition of women in the film industry, with all the financial and professional struggles that it raises, would find its origin at another level. 'Experts' have not given women directors the necessary authority to gain the producers' assurance that it is worthwhile to find the money to make the film. Would this lack of authority reside in the fact that women's work as film directors is not identified as objective, universal knowledge capable of attracting a huge audience, but as subjective knowledge arousing the interest of a limited group of people?

Women's identification with subjective knowledge, despite the fact that some of them have attracted a large popular audience, often comes from film critics influenced by dominant discourse, and may have some echo among producers. But, critics give women's knowledge more or less authority depending upon the ideological stream of creativity to which their movies belong. This suggests that male domination upon film-making goes beyond technological and gender issues. The works reviewed for this paper show that women's films that belong to the dominant stream seem to attract some positive appraisal from male critics. Thereby, their directors are vested with the authority to create openings for funding, sometimes quite substantial. Works belonging to the politicized stream seem to experience similar conditions, though at a more modest level, as the funding generally comes from groups politically and socially involved in the issues treated in the films. The most problematic streams in relation to authority are the feminine and feminist ideological streams. Film directors who belong to these experience a complex situation in which some of their work gains credit from some professional associations, and popular recognition, but not enough authority from experts from the dominant ideology to attract serious funding.

Critics are usually rather hard on these types of knowledge. Despite the awards they have won at various festivals, they do not attract much praise particularly from male critics. Maurice Bardèche, for instance, qualified movies representing the feminine stream as 'd'aimables ouvrages de dame' (lady's nice needle-work), though these movies exploit crucial feminine themes of independence and liberation (Lamartine, 1985:70). Luc Moullet writes in his critique of the feminist films made during the 1960s and 1970s: 'the anterior mediocrity of cinema can be explained by the fact that it was almost exclusively the work of managing women with male domineering characters, who offered only the faults inherent to their hybrid character' (Lamartine, 1985:80).⁸ For these critics, any theme that goes against male knowledge is to be rejected. As it is, the same critic suggested in his comments about a film prized as one of the two best films at the Festival du Cinéma in Cannes in 1963, and made by the Ukrainian director Youlia Solntseva, long after the death of her husband with whom she worked for several years, that she had won the award because she was a 'real woman', wife of a director who had good influence on her. So women's creations are given credit by some male critics when these can detect dominant knowledge in the products. Yet, Solntseva's prized film was seen by an anonymous critic as a work of her own, almost a treason in relation to what she had done previously with her husband, Dovjenko.

Films directed by women are sometimes mistreated and misunderstood because the knowledge they carry is different from dominant types of knowledge. This was the case, for instance, with Anne Claire Poirier's *Mourir à Tue-Tête* the theme of which was rape. Although Poirier denied any feminist contention in the film, or any political assessment and moral judgement on Man, some male critics saw it otherwise. Both critics in *Le Soleil* (September 1979), a widely read newspaper in Québec city, and in *La Presse* (September 1979), a widely read newspaper in Montreal, said that it was clear that the message of the film was that men were all rapists. Yet nothing in the movie could make the viewer believe that the message intended to encompass mankind. Male critics constructed their own interpretation of the film and presented it as general, universal truth. In this case, it did not prevent the film from having a popular international success. But mistreatment of feminine films has been widely applied in dominant discourse and more often than not it has been detrimental to their success. As Alice Guy puts it, she who made hundreds of short and long films: 'There is no doubt in my mind

7. A producer plans, organizes and controls the production of films. Among his or her several tasks, is that of finding funding for the director to be able to make the film. The producer is then one of the first persons to judge if the film is worth funding.

8. '... la médiocrité antérieure du cinéma féminin s'explique par la présence presque exclusive de maîtresses femmes, au tempérament mâle et dominateur, qui n'offraient au cinéma que les défauts inhérents à leur caractère hybride'.

9. 'Il n'y a pas de doute dans mon esprit que le succès des femmes dans bien des domaines est toujours rendu bien difficile par le fort préjugé contre celles de leur sexe qui oeuvrent là où seuls les hommes ont travaillé durant des siècles?'

that women's success in many domains is always made very difficult because of a strong prejudice against those of their sex who work where only men have worked during centuries' (Lamartine, 1985: 46).⁹ Some male critics indirectly recognize that prejudice. Commenting on a film directed by Mireille Dansereau, a woman director in Québec, Jean-Pierre Tadros says: '...we leave [the theatre] somewhat surprised. We expected a vibrant feminist plea, we see instead the description of a chaotic world, ...and feminine. So much the worse for our prejudices; and so much the better for the film (1972).'

Prejudices against female film-makers come also from other experts. Women's knowledge is devalued by male producers and administrators in different ways. Some have suggested to women who attempted to become directors that they should rather become models or get married (Tadros, 1972). Others have advised them to make their films in ways that would make people forget that they were women (Dussault, 1979). Sometimes, however, women directors are supported by some of their male counterparts, by technicians or by actors. This support is important for women directors as producers often force them to associate with male directors to get funding. Although this type of discrimination is not as crude as it was before the 1970s, women directors realize that they can get more money when they are associated with a man, even if he has less experience than they do. This speaks directly to the politics associated with the social hierarchy of knowledge: It clearly shows that women's knowledge is so low in that hierarchy that, in the politics of distribution of funding, an experienced female director is viewed as inferior to a new male film-maker.

As a result, women directors seem to have established niches in the world of film-making. Their highest representation is in the domains of short-length films and documentaries. Since the greatest of recognition is to make a successful feature film, it seems that there would be less competition from men in these two categories. Moreover, women are good at that kind of film, they often win professional awards. A well known filmmaker in Québec, Gilles Carle, stresses their innovative approach: 'The art of documentary is experiencing a revolution... this is women's doing' (1990: 101). From his point of view, the documentary is the only domain of cinematographic change. Thanks to women, cinema 'is experiencing some transformation'. Women's knowledge helps to attenuate the boundary between fiction and documentary, he says. By a curious coincidence, he observes, civil servants in Canada have turned documentary into a minor genre, which means that they spare little funding for the films categorized in that genre. As if to prove Carle right, NFB has lately cut its financial support to the E (for study) section, curiously that in which women were the most likely to find money.

To kill the documentary film is to kill the only cinematographic genre that is now bringing a certain revival to the core of Québécois cinema, thanks to women's contribution, and this just when it is experiencing spectacular success. It is also to deny our women film-makers the possibility, not only of making a personal film from time to time, but of pursuing a long term career' (Carle, 1990: 101).

Yet, women's work in the documentary genre is somewhat of a compulsory choice, given the lack of money to make feature films. Women often have to create their own production companies in order to get the money they need and even then, they only get small amounts. So most of them are compelled either to go into the short film or documentary, or to innovate in terms of technique, being constrained to find new ways of making their feature films with very little money. Hence, we find some very successful women in avant-garde cinema such as new wave cinema, or underground cinema, whose talent is recognized by some experts, but these genres never gain the type of authority vested in feature films dominated by men. But, do women want to have big commercial successes, if it means that they have to dismiss important aspects of their knowledge? It is not the purpose of this paper to answer this question.

Conclusion

Women's knowledge in the cinema industry should not be considered as a collective resistance to men's knowledge. My analysis shows that their contribution as film directors is diverse and should be examined in its own right. Some are creating different types of knowledge that have a definite influence on the spheres in which they work but that are not usually recognized as such by the dominant discourse. But, are the difference in types of knowledge the only reason sustaining the lack of authority of women film-makers in the film industry?

Is women's knowledge that different from that of men? It seems that whether women's films are different from men's in technique and style is partly a result of the level of funding. If women directors had access to the same levels of funding as men do, they might treat their own themes in a different way. But this does not mean that they would all do so. In their film-making, both women and men explore and speak from their own experience, influenced by gender, but also by social class, race, age and culture, as we have seen in the theoretical discussion. However, each sex seems to use a different style in this exploration. Scholars of film-making assert that men, in general, use more violent, oppressive images, and women more nuanced and realistic. Nevertheless, women directors claim to enjoy what they do, some of them say that they are not interested in making large budget feature films, even if funding was available. They take pleasure in their work despite numerous barriers that they meet in their careers, arising from the mechanisms of power created by male 'experts' in the industry.

Indeed the mechanisms of power regulating the film industry are controlled by male administrators and experts who adopt the conservative dominant discourse of rationalization in which women's knowledge is disqualified, to use Code's words. The type of knowledge valued as profitable by these men is male knowledge, based on so called 'objective', 'universal' truth, and supposed to attract mass audiences.¹⁰ Foucault's assertion that mechanisms of power are to be found at different levels is verified in the film industry where they are exercised at three levels: the administration of knowledge as truth, a level that controls which films should be profitable; the politics of knowledge created by male knowers that assess which types of knowledge should be authorized to become public; and the relations of power created by a certain type of knowledge which control who should have access to the first two levels. Women film-makers are not significantly represented at any level of these mechanisms of power in the film industry. Rather, they are those on whom power is exercised.

However, as we saw earlier, there is a noticeable gap between movies made by men and women which is to be found also between films made by women from different ideological streams. This means that women's place in the spheres of administration and production may not be the only important element in the existing mechanisms of power. My study questions women's solidarity with one another. The idea that women are essentially humanistic and understanding, and that they would spontaneously support other women's work should they find themselves in positions of power is idealistic. Competition exists in female as in male circles, though it does not necessarily take the same form. Since knowledge is as much influenced by gender as by class, race, culture, etc, women with different ideologies and politics will not spontaneously support their respective work on the principle that they are made by women.

So, how then should we understand the discrimination against women film-makers? Why is it that they cannot gain authority in the film industry despite the recognition of the quality of their work in various festivals? Is it because women's work is actually gendered work? Women's cinematographic creations should be considered as part of the culture of a society, in the way men's are. It is the politics of knowledge that is gendered, leading to discrimination in terms of vested authority and financial support.

10. This does not mean that this type of knowledge is never used by women.

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