



The Awakening of Women's Consciousness in the Western World: The Case of Women's Films Directed by Women in Europe and America

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Abstract. The rapid growth of the three women's movements was accompanied by an explosion in the number of feminist films, both of which confirmed that only by expressing the realities of historical situations in their voices could women finally achieve a breakthrough against patriarchal cultural ideas. This paper is divided into three parts, each taking the three waves of feminism as a division point and summarizing and analyzing eight films directed by representative female creators influenced by the three waves of feminism. It also combines feminist, psychoanalytic, communication, psychological, gaze, and counter-gaze theories to analyse and study the plight of women in different situations, ages, stages of life, social roles, and gender perceptions in the selected films, as well as the existential dilemmas faced by their creators. The aim is to explore the transformation of women's status in society and their own process of breaking through the shackles of thought and to jointly explore the choice of female themes and the influence of feminism in the world, especially in films created by female directors in Europe and the United States, and to summarize the laws and processes of their creation. After the sub-feminine movement, the female figure in Western cinema began to shift from one-way male objectified subjects to anti-objectified objects with female self-awareness. Eventually, they evolved into non-traditional women who are challenging to define directly.

Keywords: Women directors, Women's cinema, Europe and America, Feminism, The Theory of Staring and Being Stared

1 Introduction

The status of women is a yardstick for the development of a society's civilization, and film culture is one of the most important windows of cultural exchange in the world, so the development and study of women's cinema can be bench-marked against its socio-lect-cultural development process, with the two reflecting and complementing each other. The development of film culture in Europe and America has always been at the

forefront of the world, and the development of women's cinema has been equally rapid, thanks to the three waves of feminism in the Western world.

The first phase of feminism - late 19th century to 1960s - was represented by liberal feminism. It focused on women's access to equal power in three areas - education, employment, and politics. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir refers to men establishing themselves as subjects and objectifying women, making them subordinate to themselves. Men and women are divided into the Subject and the Other "He is the Subject (the Subject), the Absolute, and she is the Other." She realised that women should be given the same rights as men to realise their subjectivity and move towards true independence and freedom. This was a great leap forward in the history of feminism and influenced several female creators of the time.

The second phase of feminism, which is from the 1960s to 1980s, represented by radical feminism and socialist feminism, was dedicated to eliminating gender differences, not only in terms of gender inequality at the political and legal levels but also in terms of intangible cultural and custodial equality. In 1970 the American writer Kate Millett published *Sexual Politics*, which broke with and reflected on the previous male-centric creative system and male-centric critical norms by drawing on women's unique life experiences, aesthetic experiences, and critical perspectives ^[1].

In 1975, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* was published, in which Laura Mulvey combined Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis with film studies to explain the visual mechanisms of Hollywood cinema in the 1950s and 1960s. -In this article, Laura Mulvey combined Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis with film studies to explain the visual mechanisms of Hollywood cinema in the 1950s and 1960s, placing men in the position of viewing subjects and women as objects of desire to be viewed under the rubric of "voyeurism" and "fetishism"^[2]. This article was the first to introduce the idea of women being watched in the field of film studies and laid the foundation for the study of women's cinema.

The third phase of Western feminism - after the 1980s, when Western society entered the post-industrial era - saw the emergence of postmodernist schools of feminist theory. Feminism in this period moved towards a pluralistic fusion of coexistence, with the emergence of Marxist feminism, black and Asian and other minority women's literature, feminism of colour, gender politics, queer feminism, deconstructionist feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, queer theory and other theories of pluralistic fusion tendencies.

At the same time, Western feminists believe that no male writer can objectively narrate the fate of women beyond their male perspective. Only by engaging in creative work themselves can women change the slave-like silence in which they are held and express their true historical situation in a female voice, ultimately achieving a breakthrough against patriarchal culture. This is why women's films made by women directors are important in the history of social and cultural development.

The term "women's cinema" first appeared in 1970, when it was first introduced by American scholar Murray Hasker in *From Awe to Rape: The Shaping of Women in Film*, referring to a genre of women's films that had emerged in Hollywood in the 1930s to tell women's stories and target audiences. Since then, as feminist thinking and film art have continued to merge, academic opinion on the definition of "women's cinema"

has varied, with women's cinema scholar Teresa DeLaurie S. arguing that the definition or range of meaning of women's cinema, like "feminism" is as questionable and controversial as "feminism" [1]. At present, most definitions of women's cinema remain vague and open to much discussion, with an artist's view that expressing the female situation and its perspectives is called women's cinema, and another part of scholars arguing that women's cinema simply refers specifically to films made by female directors and has little to do with content. This paper combines the above views and draws a new research direction, extracting a part of the women's cinema paradigm as the object of discussion, which is smaller in scope and more representative of feminism, where the director or screenwriter is a woman, and the protagonist is a woman, and which satisfies the requirement of expressing a female perspective according to feminist views. This paper uses case studies to analyse the relevant literature and compare and contrast the literature and films that have been produced according to the feminist perspective on women's cinema criticism and to outline the characteristics of the development of these works. While previous literature has mostly combined the three waves of women's movements with literature, this essay focuses on the different strands of the three women's movements and seeks to discover the relevance and significance of women's cinema for women directors and women's movements.

The film industry has developed into a rich genre, and the proportion of women's films has gradually increased, with many of them produced by female directors. This article mainly extracts the works of female directors in the category of women's cinema in the West mainly in Europe and America), women's films that are more representative and have left a strong mark in the whole history of world cinema, such as *Afternoon Daze*, *On Land*, *Ritual in Metamorphic Time*, *Women's Voices: Our Bodies, Our Sex*, *Jeanne Dielman*, *The Piano Lesson*, *The Death of a Virgin*, and *Burning Portrait of a Woman*. Using the case study method to analyse the literature, authors add elements of women's film criticism to divide the women's films created by women directors in the Western film world by three waves of feminism. It also combines feminism, psychoanalysis, communication, psychology, gaze and counter-gaze, and other scientific theoretical approaches. The film analyses the awakening of female self-consciousness in selected cinematic texts and a summary of the stages.

2 Analysis

2.1 The Difficult Quest for Self-Knowledge and Self-Powdering

With the French Revolution and the Enlightenment in Western Europe, the first signs of liberal feminism were born, which advocated the use of reason to fight for women's rights, thus starting the first wave of feminism. It argued that the psychological differences between the sexes resulted from unequal access to education, opposed the emphasis on gender differences, and advocated that all human beings were born equal. At this stage, no major concept of women's cinema had yet emerged. However, the first changes in the portrayal of women on screen can be seen in some cinematographic works, with the appearance of women of higher social status, including pilots and bank

managers, and other highly educated women. From the French avant-garde to the German Expressionist experimental image, Maya Dahlen, as the representative female director of this period, was influenced by the European avant-garde film movement, and her trilogy, "Confusion in the Afternoon", "On Land" and "Rituals in Metamorphic Time" belong to the American avant-garde genre of films, with strong pioneering experimental colours, the director uses the aesthetic concepts and techniques of modern art to create films, and the emotions expressed are one by one. From the budding of self-consciousness to the first step towards self-breakthrough, the films express that women are actively exploring the world and interpreting themselves, a progression in the independent exploration of women's emotions and thoughts by female creators.

One of Maya Dylan's trilogy, *Afternoon Daze*, is 15 minutes long and focuses on a woman's nonsensical yet traceable dreams, powerfully portraying the complex relationship between women and domestic space. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud refers to six forms of dream work, symbolism, transposition, projection, metamorphosis, secondary processing, and therapeutic methods, and he suggests that dreamers often unconsciously modify and process their dreams during the waking process to make it more sequential or logical; or to place what is most meaningful in the dream instead in a secondary or unremarkable position ^[3]. Clearly, Maya's use of the artistic language of the camera to express the dream is precise in its form of dream work, as she examines the room as both familiar and unfamiliar from the perspective of herself, played by the only woman in the film, Maya Daren, and walk through the space she has recreated in the dream from her first perspective, after which the same Maya, along the same journey four times over, only each time with a different point of articulation, focusing on a different aspect. The pace is also different. The ending is as if Maya's alter ego is trying to kill Maya's alter ego. The husband and Maya are trying to make out and end up murdering each other. The footsteps on the floor of the house are as if they are walking on the sea and the beach. A still frame of Maya herself in the film has also become a classic shot, as she looks out of the window objectively and calmly, without any emotion. She looks out of the window without any emotion, as if she were an outsider looking in on all her actions. Maya is looking out of her home, through a window, at her alter ego. The film portrays the reality of women bound by their families, women struggling with themselves, women torn between love and hate with their husbands, and women struggling to be reborn. The silent eyes convey a dream-like message, and the camera freely wanders between dream and real life, between the conscious and the subconscious. Life and death, male and female, home and away, there is no clear boundary between dream and reality. The dream and the reality are thus reflected in each other, and the domestic space of the woman is intertwined with her inner space, showing the desires and fears of women and the interdependent and tormented relationship between the two sexes ^[4].

In 1944, *In the Land* was released, again presenting a gloriously bizarre image of female destiny, a 15-minute silent experimental short film directed and written by Maya, in which she stars as a woman washed up on a beach by the waves, embarking on a fantastical journey in which she meets many people and encounters multiple selves, using clever editing of the gaze and transitions between different times and spaces, with the world surrounding her, while the female body remains continuous. *Rituals in Metamorphic Time*, which came out back-to-back in 1947, paints a stunning

picture from the same female perspective, switching several times between slow-motion scenes of woolen rolls, field parties, and garden scenes filled with stone carvings, with slow-motion and stop-motion shots of male dancers taking big leaps, and ending with a woman being drenched by the sea and transformed from widow to bride. In the end, the woman is drenched in water on the seashore and transforms from widow to bride, as if turning back the clock and changing identities, as if the rituals of life were reversed. Maya's trilogy has been named by many scholars as a feminine trilogy. Her unique female perspective, aided by the female body, makes everything fresh, in a sense breaking the social rules of the society of the time, as women begin to look at themselves and stand at the centre of the film's social and emotional perspective.

2.2 Physical struggle and spiritual reconstruction in the dilemmas.

With the first International Women's Film Festival held in New York in 1972 and the launch of the first journal dedicated to feminist cinema, *Women and Film*, the feminist movement entered its second phase. The second wave of feminism saw the emergence of feminist cinema as a form of reproduction of feminism and the social and radical feminism that characterized the period. Films such as "Women Reply" and "Jeanne Dielman " not only reproduced on screen the social injustice caused by gender differences, making the economic base and division of labour the material basis of women's oppression but also established a paradigm for the role of women in a patriarchal society of oppression, two films that illustrated the key ideas of the second phase of the feminism movement and laid a solid foundation for the development of women's cinema. Both films illustrate the key ideas of the second phase of the feminist movement and provide a solid foundation for the development of women's cinema. In an idealized society of gender equality, men and women should learn to respect each other through checks and balances, dissolving the contradictory differences into stable patterns of interdependence. When these checks and balances are broken, male dominance creates unequal one-way domination, commonly known as a 'patriarchal' society. Kate Millett first referred to this concept in *Sexual Politics*, meaning a social relationship in which men dominate women. In a "patriarchal" society, men act as scrutineers of women and women are gazed at as images, reacting to male-dominated thought, consciousness and love, and this irrational relationship is bound to falter with the development of feminist thought [5].

Radical feminism argued that it was patriarchy, characterized by power, domination and hierarchy, that created the oppression of women. Women of this period, therefore, advocated the eradication of gender, emphasizing the universal colorization of women, the elimination of gender distinctions, and the creation of a gender-neutral future. At the same time, the films of many feminist filmmakers also show a rebellion against Hollywood, with Laura Mulvey noting that "women cannot be satisfied with an aesthetic that limits the anti-cinema to work on form, that feminism is tied to its politics, and that its experiments cannot exclude work on content." Dissatisfied with the Hollywood model's stereotypical portrayal of female characters, many female directors began to adopt a different cinematic language to express the main themes of women's films.

The common characteristic of female directors of this period was the search for a suitable language of expression; their desire to find the roots of oppression gave them a particular sensitivity to feminism. Moreover, they explored their films, giving experimental meaning to the model of cinema.

The film "Women Reply" presents the viewer with a model of this kind of cinema, in which Arlette Varda focuses on the portrayal of the body and women's sexuality from the perspective of women's most fundamental gender identities. She argues that it is now difficult for women to escape the social identities imposed on them by a patriarchal society and that they can only acquiesce to the accumulation of labels that do not belong to them until they lose themselves completely. As the film's line says, "Every time I see a pornographic poster like this, women feel that the person on the poster is themselves", and they unwittingly complete their self-regulation in a patriarchal society and eventually become "material to fill men's desires". Faced with the question of how women should confront patriarchal society, Arlette Varda proposes a possible answer in the form of a "film flyer", which uses the woman's body as the main axis of reflection to question the moral standards of society. She allows women to confess the "Idealized qualities" that men see in them, and to express their rejection of these qualities in a firm manner, thus accusing patriarchal society of oppressing their identity and promoting the "reinvention" of women. At the same time, the film concludes by suggesting that, in addition to the reinvention of the woman herself, the love between a man and a woman must also be reinvented. In other words, the unilateral choice of the man over the woman is denied, and a marriage based on love is supported, proving that there is no difference between men and women by their mutual choice^[6]. This normal demand was difficult to achieve at the time when men's demands on their partners were often extreme and divisive. On the one hand, they were expected to submit to human morality and not to talk about their physical desires; on the other hand, women were expected to "show their thighs to match their stockings" and to exist as a kind of foil to successful men. Thus, although the film reflected the objective need for women to fight for equal rights, it was resisted by men en masse at the time. It seems that it was a long and difficult process for women directors to break free of the rules of their patriarchal society.

Socialist feminism attributes the differences between men and women to a combination of class relations and material bases. At the same time, socialist feminism clearly illustrates the limitations imposed on women regarding class, race, and culture. The theory argues that women's oppression has deep class roots and that domestic work forms the material basis of women's oppression."

Jeanne Dielman", directed by Chantal Akerman, is an almost faithful 'documentary' of the daily life of its protagonist." Jeanne Dielman", through a number of long shots, in which the director gives Jeanne secularized identities such as widow, mother, and even prostitute. As she works day in and day out, she gradually turns the centre of her life towards the male other and forgets the meaning of her existence. The film creates a female 'feminine time' and shows the audience the fragility of this 'feminine time' itself. Jeanne Dielman lives a regular life, so precise that it could be called a mechanized routine. She arranges everything in the house according to her own rules, puts everything she uses back in its place, and does not allow any mistakes. The director wants

the female audience to take a fresh look at their own lives and to be brave enough to fight when they realize that what they are experiencing is not what they want. In the final minutes of the film, Jeanne suddenly stabs John to death with a pair of scissors. The film comes to an abrupt end. "Jeanne Dielman" is a feminist classic that creates a "feminine time" without class or patriarchy, and it follows the life of Dielman step by step, away from the male-dominated set-up of the film. With Jeanne's actions at the end of the film, the "feminine time" finally collapses, and even though she fights as a female victim, the only thing that awaits her is the merciless verdict of the law. It is precisely this wordless ending that satirizes the fragility of this illusion ^[7]. After being subjected to uninterrupted male aggression in the form of identity, mental and physical, she finally resists, albeit in a slightly extreme way in the modern perspective, but it is also the only way to realistically portray women who have awakened after their trials and tribulations. Since the vast majority of women's social identities in previous films have been assigned to them by men, it reduces them to objectified subordination at the mercy of men, when in fact, all these additional identities should be based on one foundation - womanhood. Thus, in the end, Jeanne stabs the John to death, both in the most violent way possible as a direct rejection of the oppression of her labour and as a reversal of all her current identities, allowing her to return to her most authentic and original image of womanhood. The director shouts out to the world that women do not need any form of identity from others but only need to identify with themselves and that feminist cinema will, in the process of renewal and transformation, illuminate a new direction for feminist theory.

2.3 Self-identification and self-redemption after breaking the cocoon

In contemporary society, women's desire for feminism is at an all-time high, and the unavoidable 'female power' is becoming an inescapable topic, with women desperately needing an image that represents their sense of independence. The feminist trend of this period is mainly based on post-modern feminism. On this basis, several theoretical branches have been established, and the diversity and differences of theories have become the core of the author's attention. Women directors began to question the definition of gender; they emphasized the concern for sexual minorities and focused on the interaction, conflict, and integration of gender issues in a global context. The typical films of the third women's movement, "The Piano", "The Virgin Suicides," and "Portrait of a Lady on Fire", are analyzed in terms of three different theories: psychoanalytic feminism, gaze theory and lesbian feminism, in which "women" began to resist the oppression of patriarchal society in various forms and to seek a true sense of self-worth.

In *The Ego and the Self*, Freud proposed three theories of personality: firstly, the id, which is directly influenced by the physical and is the driving force of life; secondly, the ego, which sets limits to the self; and thirdly, the superego, which is the social norm. In his theory, the domination of patriarchal society is ubiquitous, so femininity cannot be understood in biological terms, and sexual difference is primarily concerned with psychological rather than material reality. The masses form a sexual identity in conflict with the sexes, an identity that permeates almost all social relations ^[8]. "The Piano" incorporates Freudian ideas and shows the audience the use of psychoanalytic feminism

in film. The protagonist, Ada, has been in a state of "aphasia" since childhood. This aphasia is not a symptom of physical causes but rather a free choice of spirit, in which she confronts patriarchal society by being "voiceless". At the same time, the piano acts as a 'metaphysical' mental language to replace Ada's voice, which conveys her emotional changes through the ebb and flow of her voice, even as the entire soundtrack serves as a narrative vehicle for her emotional transformation. It is not until the end of the film when Ada makes her own free choice, that she gradually learns to articulate her words and takes on a real sense of female voice. The piano no longer serves as a vehicle for her expression, and having gained the freedom to speak, she sinks it into the deep sea, freeing herself from the shackles of patriarchal society. Jane Campion's delicate and emotional portrayal of the character's "self" is illustrated by the opening voice-over of Ada, who tells the audience that what they hear is not the sound of her mouth, but the sound of her heart. In Freud's theory, this monologue from the heart expresses the self. What Ada experiences represents the life of a woman in her time. Even if Ada is unable to express herself in words, her thoughts are enough to break through social norms and declare feminist ideas as an expression of the superego ^[9]. According to Freud, the desire of adults to return to their mother's womb is, in fact, a "nirvana" instinct of life and death, and the film's deep sea is symbolic of the "mother's womb". The sea is the dividing line between life and death, the surface of the sea is the dividing line between life and death, and Ada's deliberate fall into the deep sea symbolizes her nirvana and rebirth as an individual woman. However, this seemingly happy ending is not so much a triumph of feminism as it is a dream constructed by the director from the standpoint of women. Ada is still fleeing from the isolated island that symbolizes the patriarchal society, while the concessions of her husband and the compromises of the patriarchy are so hopeless in the real world. Jane uses a number of feminist symbols to outline a critique and reflection on reality but ultimately suffers from the need to manifest the feminine spirit, allowing the characters in the shot to exit as satisfactorily as possible.

The established notion of the "gaze" in the film comes from Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in which she argues that the female character in film and television has become a rather monotonous object and can only be gazed at by male characters in one direction ^[10]. Mulvey defaults to the role of the male in control of the camera and assumes that most film genres serve male audiences. At this point, the "gaze" evolves from a mere interpretation of action to a male-dominated "examination" of the female population. While being gazed at for a long time, women continued to explore the gender consciousness behind the gaze. They realized that the male gaze is a societal phenomenon that feminism must resist, so women carried out their own "review" in the struggle for affirmative action and established a "counter-gaze" dominated by female aesthetics. "The existence of the "counter-gaze" based on the dismantling of the power of the gaze and is also subversive in nature ^[11]. Directed by Sofia Coppola, "The Virgin Suicides" is a film that visually reveals the normal biological desires of women, thus casting the mirror of the "anti-glare". The director uses the fight of five sisters in the Lisbon family to illustrate the persecution of underage girls caused by the male gaze and to complain about the "injustice" of society's suppression of female needs. Adolescent women are often more mature than men, eager to interact with men

and taste the ignorance of love, but under the double oppression of society and family, there is no other way to vent their desires. The girls become increasingly indulgent; they begin to cheat with boys, have reckless sex on the roof, and eventually crazy into the fantasy. However, after the pleasure, waiting for them are chains, confinement, prison, and the end of life. In the film, the boys gaze at women by looking at their diaries, and in the eyes of the immature mind, the girls are mysterious muses; their every smile is so unpredictable as if all the wonderful things of time are related to the girls. As they come into contact with the girls gradually getting inside their heads, the boys begin to be gazed at in reverse; they begin to understand the plight of the girls and want to help them in any way they can. Finally, one day, a few boys took advantage of the night to try to rescue them. The wonderful picture of the trip they imagined before forever turned into imagination. What was waiting for the boys was only the four girls' cold bodies. It is worth mentioning that the gaze of the film is not represented by a male but by another woman, the mother of the five sisters. As an adult woman, she has been unconsciously transformed into a male subordinate, as most women are; men set up a complex set of social ethics to choose them, they exist only to serve male desires and social norms, and the characters themselves do not seem to feel any wrong, but just happy to complete the mission given to them by the film. In this way, the film not only portrays the "ideal female form" as seen by men under the "gaze" but also demonstrates the need for young women to have an outlet for interaction outside the home ^[12]. Coppola uses her work to give some women a wake-up call and to tell the women of the world that life is not about obeying society's demands that women fulfill their roles but rather about enriching the life of an "objective woman".

Since the 1960s, the introduction of lesbian separatism has allowed many women dissatisfied with hetero-normative hegemony to find a new identity. The political identity of the lesbian gender has made the elimination of gender sound less like a distant dream, and lesbians have escaped and even challenged hetero-normative hegemony by rejecting heterosexuality. Wittig argues that the only way for women to break free from slavery is to destroy gender and abolish the mechanisms of heterosexuality constructed within this sphere. Whereas the definition of woman is bound to a hetero-normative system of thinking, lesbianism is not bound to this relationship. For a lesbian, therefore, homosexuality is not only a rejection of the role of 'woman' but also a rejection of the economic, intellectual, and political power of men. "Portrait of a Lady on Fire" may seem to create a vacuum of purely female society, but the absence of male characters in the film does not make the patriarchal society any less oppressive. When Marianne's drawing board falls into the sea, none of the men on board offer her a helping hand; they watch indifferently as Marianne jumps into the sea and retrieves it by herself. The sea, as a symbol of patriarchal society, has the power to swallow everything, and women must learn to 'swim' if they are to survive here, i.e., learn how to earn a living. This is a skill that Lois clearly does not possess, as Marianne is repeatedly asked if she can swim, and she looks out to sea and replies, "I don't know". She swims into the sea again and again, trying to escape the grip of patriarchal society, but she is unable to control her own destiny and is swept back to the shore by the waves again and again. At the same time, the demise of her love affair with Marie begins and ends with male power, with Marianne painting in her father's name and Lois forced to marry far away

without having a chance to get a word from her future husband. For in the eyes of others, she is a walking womb with its wealth, a mere cornerstone of the family's expansion. However, even so, they have the courage to fight back against it, and director Celine gives them both a heartfelt, homosexual love affair as a portrait of feminism in her mind. Shaky scenes dominate the first half of the film, and it is not until later that the foreground shots stabilize, suggesting the process of the two men's growing relationship as they move from knowing each other to falling in love. During the bonfire, Lois' dress is burnt off one hem, but she ignores the spreading fire and looks at Marianne with affection until the maid puts it out. Burning is now seen as an action, and in the film, it is not only about the fire of love between women but also a reflection on female liberation. The mother wants to frame Lois in a way that makes her a socially competitive bargaining chip. In such a situation, the portrait serves as a vehicle to carry the oppression of the male gaze, suppressing Lois's independence and individuality. Marianne's ignition of the tangible portrait fully expresses the women's desire for their own liberation, and the leaping fire, like the women's pent-up anger, encourages them to break through the world and fight.^[13] People are keen to see female characters break out of their shackles, and the love between the female protagonists proves that women can achieve "Eurydice" style victories with the added benefit of homosexuality. However, the increasing number of gay women portrayed in this way also raises entirely new questions. Whether the public will develop an aesthetic crystallization of homosexuality as a representation and how homosexuality should be defined on-screen remain to be answered.

3 Discussion

In early patriarchal societies, the constraint of power over women was hidden in the constructs of the male gaze, and the portrayal of women in films was entirely dependent on male preferences. Feminism gradually awakened and built up the walls of feminism in the struggle against male power. They began to create a portrait of women in line with their aesthetics, eventually making the female characters more vivid. The male-dominated film market has also had to give in to these outstanding female directors. The image of women in Western cinema has gone through three stages: "the difficult exploration of self-knowledge and self-purification", "physical struggle and spiritual reconstruction in a dilemma", and "self-identification and self-redemption after breaking the cocoon". "After three stages, they began to shift from one-way male objectified subjects to anti-objectified objects with female self-consciousness, and eventually evolved into non-traditional women who are difficult to be directly defined, and their emergence has manifested the developmental power of feminism.

At the same time, "feminism" began to move from singularity to diversity, from the first stage of pursuing equality of power and opposing differences between men and women to the second stage of reflecting on the root causes of women's oppression and engaging in self-deconstruction, self-reflection, and self-regulation, to the third stage of breaking through the barriers of traditional genre film creation and pursuing individual self-expression. The author's vision of feminism is reflected in the struggle against

the oppression of patriarchal society from the perspective of both the spirit and the flesh. At the same time, women should be wary of the current trendy aesthetic orientation. Whether this seemingly feminine aesthetic is, the intentional work of opportunists needs to be verified by the film industry in practice. The increase in feminist cinema has led some women to indulge in the illusion of their aesthetic 'moving into the mainstream', not realizing this is only an illusion. Therefore, female directors should seek to find a balance in the gender confrontation, clarify whether the awakening of feminism is the result of the intentional manipulation of capital behind it, and create feminist films in the true sense of the word.

4 Conclusion

The rapid growth of the three feminist movements was accompanied by an explosion in the number of feminist films, both of which together confirmed that only by expressing the realities of historical situations in their voices could women finally break away from patriarchal cultural concepts. The three stages of the feminist movement were also fueled by cinema and gained a wider influence. Feminist cinema, while practicing theories of feminist thought, also projects the directors' ideas on rolls and screens, portraying women as avatars who perform tasks in their place that are difficult to achieve in a patriarchal society. The success of these characters undoubtedly inspired the awakening of oppressed women to independence and contributed immeasurably to the success of the feminist movement worldwide. Within the same period, the female characters all served the prevailing ideology, so that they may share some similarities. However, ultimately, the image of women still varies according to the director's self-expression, and this variation has gradually increased along with the development of feminist thinking, gradually evolving from a relatively homogeneous to a variety of independent images of women. Thus, at a time when feminism is changing, the so-called 'commonality of female characters' seems to have become a sort of pseudo-proposition since women themselves should not be defined, and it is not just a matter of some 'commonality'. It is believed that one day women will break through the existing barriers and shackles and, in the flourishing development of contemporary cinema, convey the true power of women and achieve true "equality between men and women", all of which is a long way to go and still needs to be explored by all female filmmakers, who will continue to expand the feminist system of thought.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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