

The Feminine Eye: lecture 1: WHERE ARE MY CHILDREN? 1916: 65m:

April 4:
week #1

Introduction to the Course:

Syllabus

Handouts

The First Women Directors: Silent Films:

Alice Guy-Blaché / Lois Weber

Screening: **WHERE ARE MY CHILDREN?** (Lois Weber, 1916)

Welcome to OLLI:

business:

1. information re: campus services & opportunities:

OLLI Basics 101: on table

2. those needing cart rides:

can call 664-2612:

but cart makes sweep

3. if you haven't picked up parking pass:

please do so right after class:

otherwise: you'll be ticketed

pass: available from Melanie

4. new students: pick up student ID cards:

Customer Services: Salazar: 11:30am – 1pm

ID cards: library

returning students:

get new stickers at back of room

5. bring a buddy: tell your friends re: OLLI:

get them to enroll: you get:

\$20 SeaWolf gift card

talk to Julie re: gift certificate

6. reminders:

when you come to class:

check your name off on class roster

pick up class handouts & *Gray Matters*

lost & found at back of room

wear layered clothing

we should be good campers:

pick up after ourselves:

leave room as clean as we found it

welcome to The Feminine Eye: Women Film Directors:

meeting: every Monday at this time:

1pm: class will run till 3:45pm

runs longer because of screening entire film each week

introduce myself

M.A.: Cinema Studies:

SFSU

NVC: 5 + years

teaching at OLLI since start of program:

courses on: Hitchcock
silent films
Hollywood musicals
blacks in films
film noir
pre-Code films

LFOF: film group: Rialto:

on hiatus: until we hear from Ky:

hope to be operating again soon

I love movies!

break: 5m before screening of film

doors: side panel open:

better to use when we're watching films:

too much light on screen when door opened

handouts:1. syllabus: before going over syllabus:

remarks re: choices made / path taken: creating course:

3 films: basis for my desire to do course on women directors;

films intrigued me: made me want to know more

made me want to share them with you all

also: wanted to give you sense of history re: women directors:

this: take up another 2 weeks of course:

5 weeks down: 2 left to program:

I was in middle of making up syllabus:

when I heard re: semester being cut to 6 weeks:

only 1 week left to program

I knew I was in trouble

I knew I couldn't cover scope I wanted to cover

I knew many students would be disappointed:

in screening selections

in omission of women directors:

they looked forward to learning re:

so: I'm sorry for any disappointments:

it's been frustrating for me, too

6 week semester: means original range I wanted to cover:

is more abbreviated now:

Kip: maybe: additional course later on:

to cover more women directors?

let me know what you think re: that:

as semester progresses

read over syllabus

questions?

handouts: continued:

2. Women Directors:

started list many months ago:

I thought it would be pretty short

but: what's impressed me most:

wide cultural range of women directors:

especially recently

primarily thanks to independent cinema:

women from all over the world:

from virtually every country on earth:

are making movies

telling all kinds of stories:

fiction films in all genres:

dramas

action movies

comedies

also: doc & experimental films

I thought it would be good for you to have tool:

to familiarize yourselves with women who've made movies

to show you scope of these women directors

to help you to find & see movies of interest to you:

now: especially with NetFlix / downloading of movies:

so much is available:

for you to take advantage of

go over handout:

directors: arranged by country

Karen: thank you

easier to find what you want

list: not complete: within days of delivering list for printing:

found out:

Lillian Gish: great actor:

particularly for DWG:

BOAN

BROKEN BLOSSOMS

WAY DOWN EAST

later: DUEL IN THE SUN

NIGHT OF THE HUNTER

directed film: 1920:

REMODELING HER HUSBAND:

starring Gish's sister Dorothy

eagerly sought "lost" film

please: when you hear of women directors not on list:

share info with us: help expand list

imdb.com

handouts: continued:

3. DVDs in Portable Library:

idea for library for student use:

so many good films: so little time in class

students in past classes: enjoy access

how should you use library?

familiarize yourself with titles:

see what films are about, etc.

many of them: you'll recognize

pay attention in class:

many movies referred to / clips shown

movies that interest you:

take them home & watch them:

add to your knowledge re: women directors

share with class:

part of class set aside: 5m:

to talk re: films discovered by students?

would you like to do this every week?

if you have certain interests:

talk to me: I'll try to point you in right direction

go over handout

demo: explain how to borrow DVDs

The First Women Directors: Silent Films:

women: played remarkable role in early film industry:

enjoyed degrees of creative control:

that remain unparalleled even today

as directors, screenwriters, actors:

helped shape cinematic language in early 20th C

in days of silent films:

women directed action from behind camera:

but their early contributions largely ignored

quite a few female directors made films in pre-sound era:

including: woman considered by many to be:

“first” female director:

Alice Guy-Blaché: Paris, France 1873 – 1968 Mahwah, New Jersey

Guy-Blaché: began making films at turn of 20th C:

1st public showing of movie:

1895: café: Paris

her 1st movie: very next year:

1896: short: LA FEE AUX CHOUX: THE CABBAGE FAIRY

Guy-Blaché: credited with helping develop narrative film structure:

when films began telling stories:

instead of just filming everyday events in life

Guy-Blaché: firmly believed women more suited to directing films than men:

“Not only is a woman as well-fitted to stage a photo-drama as a man, but in many ways she has a distinct advantage over him because of her very nature and because much of the knowledge called for in the telling of the story and the creation of the stage setting is absolutely within her province as a member of the gentler sex. She is an authority on the emotions. [...] There is nothing connected with the staging of a motion picture that a woman cannot do as easily as a man.”

Guy-Blaché’s exact output: unknown:

estimated she directed several hundred short films in her career:

including: ESMERALDA: 1906:

considered 1st filmed version:

Victor Hugo’s *Hunchback of Notre Dame*

1907: she married filmmaker Herbert Blaché:

moved to U.S.

in New Jersey: at time: center of filmmaking in country:

Guy-Blaché founded Solax Studios: in Fort Lee:

1 of 1st film studios in US

became 1st woman to build her own motion picture studio

Guy-Blaché’s work: noted for its narrative qualities:

storytelling:

many titles: classified as “woman’s film”:

but: her work: unfailingly modern

excitement re: her work:

insistence on experimentation:

culminated with her work at Gaumont Films

Gaumont: developed system: synchronizing sound & picture:

called “Chronophone”:

1900-1910: Guy-Blaché: directed “dozens & dozens”:

talking picture shorts: all believed to be lost

1916-17: THE OCEAN WAIF:

abused young woman: finds safety & eventually love:

in arms of famous novelist:

clip: THE OCEAN WAIF: ch 4: 3 m

Women Directors of Universal Pictures:

Universal: started by Carl Laemmle: 1912:

silent era: contained largest number of women directors at 1 studio:

at 1 point: 9 women filmmakers:

1 of women directing films for Universal:

Cleo Madison: Bloomington, IL: 1883 – 1964 Burbank, CA

successful actress for studio:

100 movies: shorts: plays all sorts of roles

most prominent actress at Universal to become director:

directed 17 films: 1915 – 1917:

2-reel dramatic shorts & features

1916: ELEANOR'S CATCH:

15 m short: released by Universal:

directed & produced by Cleo Madison

story: she stars as young city girl:

dragged into life of crime:

by ne'er-do-well suitor

terrific surprise ending:

promotes women's equality in workforce

clip: HYPOCRITES dvd:

ELEANOR'S CATCH: ch 2 +: 0:12:00 mark: 2 m

another woman directing films for Universal Pictures:

Ruth Ann Baldwin: West Suffield, CT 1886 - ????

journalist: joined Universal: 1913: screenwriter:

credited with: writing 30 movies: 1913 - 1921

12 films as director: all 1917

most famous film: also her last 1:

49-17: title: refers to years: 1849: gold rush / 1917: current time

western parody: 63 m: Universal release:

re: millionaire: hires Wild West theatrical troupe:

to relive his past as miner-49er

sacred western cows turned on their ear:

patriarchal representative of law

the Young Man

the Gambler

the saloon brawl

the Woman

clip: THE OCEAN WAIF dvd:

49-17: ch 3 +: 0:36:30 mark: 3 m

party to welcome judge to Nugget Notch

exciting sequence: angles / tinting / action

another woman directing films:

this 1 with her own production company:

Dorothy Davenport Reid: Mrs. Wallace Reid:

Boston, MA 1895 – 1977 L.A., CA

another actress-turned director:

started in silent films: DWG:

had good career: nothing spectacular

1913: married actor Wallace Reid:

together: they created some short films:

shared duties: acting, directing, filming:

up to 2 pix a week

Reid's star continued to rise: BOAN / INTOLERANCE:

Dorothy's ambitions took back seat to husband's career

1923: Reid died of drug overdose:

had become addicted to morphine:

after being injured in train accident

afterwards: Dorothy returned to filmmaking:

produced & directed

HUMAN WRECKAGE: 1923:

re: dangerous effects of drug addiction:

she traveled the country with film:

underscoring anti-drug message

film: now lost

Dorothy: then directed 2 "social consciousness" films:

1924: BROKEN LAWS: this film: also lost

dealing with juvenile delinquency

1925: THE RED KIMONA:

made after she started her own production company:

Mrs. Wallace Reid Productions

based on story by her protege:

Dorothy Arzner: more next week

screenplay: Adela Rogers St. John

Dorothy: credited as producer of film:

her contributions as co-director:

not acknowledged onscreen

driving force behind getting film made

based on true story: life of Gabrielle Darley:

young woman lured into life of prostitution:

shoots & kills pimp

murder trial: *cause celebre*

befriended by rich society woman during trial:

once she's acquitted: newsmen gone:

society woman ditches her

clip: THE RED KIMONA: ch 2 +: 0:01:00 mark: 2.5 m

Dorothy Davenport Reid's intro

Lois Weber: Moralistic Moviemaker:

Allegheny PA: 1882 – 1939: LA, CA

Weber's death: obits:

included: her lengthy career: 1908 – 1934: 22 years

her many roles in early Hollywood:

acting

writing

directing & producing

designing sets

editing

also: discovered, coached & advanced careers of many actors

1908: silent era: Weber & husband Phillips Smalley:

worked for Gaumont Studios:

made lots of films:

Weber: wrote scenarios & dialog:

directed & acted: 1st US woman director

1911: Weber & Smalley: Rex Studios: owned by Edwin S. Porter: GTR:

Weber: helped write, edit, act & direct most Rex films:

1913-1914: Weber & Smalley: put out 2 2-reelers: every month:

each film: Weber: co-directed, co-wrote & acted in

Weber's output: her own estimate: between 200 & 400 films:

but fewer than 50 identified as hers

by 1914: Weber: well known director:

made HYPOCRITES: for Bosworth Company:

released 1915:

follows parallel stories:

early Christian ascetic / modern minister:

most actors playing dual roles

monk: devotes himself to completing statue of "Truth":

but he's murdered by mob:

when statue: "Truth":

turns out to be image of naked woman

modern minister: pastor of large urban congregation:

for them: religion:

largely matter of appearances: not beliefs

hypocrisy of congregation exposed:

when "Naked Truth": literally: nude woman:

reveals their appetites:

for money, sex & power

clip: HYPOCRITES: ch 4 +: 0:32:00 mark: 2 m

monk Gabriel reveals "Truth" to people

1915: Weber a director at Universal:

earning \$5,000 / week:

highest paid director in Hollywood:

man or woman

Weber's belief:

films could be used to inspire social improvements:

films could lead the way re: social improvements

making morality message movies:

but eye on the box office, too

1916: peak of Weber's success:

WHERE ARE MY CHILDREN?: banned by PA censor board:

huge box office success: big audiences: \$3 million:

2 inflammatory messages:

abortion is a crime

birth control is necessary

Weber: wrote script from story by Lucy Payton & Franklin Hall:

explosive themes:

2 paragraph preface to film:

if birth control can be discussed in books:

films should be able to deal with it, too

movie not appropriate for kids w/o parents:

self-imposed censorship: 1st time?

WHERE ARE MY CHILDREN?

story: district attorney learns he's childless:
 because wife has had abortions
 most of film: deals with "race suicide":
 abortion on demand: as practiced by:
 "group of vapid social butterflies":
 using abortion: as birth control:
 no birth control for women in 1916
 Weber: clear distinctions between:
 "charitable human issues"
 what she saw as "slackening moral standards"
 all her life: championed ideals of Christian fundamentalism
 film realistic for contemporary audiences:
 they saw everyday women: appealing chars:
 choosing alternative to motherhood
 at time film was made: popular movement:
 eugenics: "the applied science or the biosocial movement which advocates the use
 of practices aimed at improving the genetic composition of a population":
 widely popular in early decades of 20th C:
 by late 20th C: had fallen into disfavor:
 having become associated with Nazi Germany
 eugenics: became associated with Nazi abuses:
 enforced racial hygiene
 human experimentation
 extermination of "undesired" population groups
 however: at end of 20th C:
 developments in genetic & reproductive technologies:
 have raised new questions & concerns:
 re: eugenics: its ethical & moral status in modern era:
 creating resurgence of interest in eugenics
 after break: come back to see:
 Universal's top b.o. attraction for 1916:
 WHERE ARE MY CHILDREN:
 added to National Film Registry: 1993
 way story unfolds: lots of crosscutting:
 compare contrast
 remember: these subjects not broached under PCA

2:10pm: break

2:15pm:

screening: WHERE ARE MY CHILDREN?

post-screening:

would man have made this movie?

when WHERE released: felony to circulate info on contraception or family planning

opening preamble: makes case that films should be able to deal with serious issues:

like birth control

prologue: opens film: Weber's editorial voice:

view behind great portals of eternity: souls of children waiting to be born:

conception discussed on spiritual terms:

not what Margaret Sanger did

attempts to add theological weight to theory of eugenics:

rationale for population control

as film progresses: film's arguments presented thru D.A. Richard Walton:

introduced as he watches court case:

his body & cop's: frame doorway to court:

emphasizes male POV:

men: guide our view of reproductive politics:

women's voices: noticeably absent

Richard's view: crime could be wiped out:

by better family planning:

reflects racist & classist bias of eugenics

1st view of Waltons' home life:

contrasts sharply with 1st scene: dark cramped courtroom: to: sunny locale

wife Edith: lying on chaise lounge: feeding chocolates to dogs:

evokes idleness & privilege

crosscutting: Walton home / car:

male spheres / female spheres

tension: underlies Waltons' cheerful facade:

Richard: conceals disappointment from wife

Edith: hides darker secret

visit by Richard's sister & baby: begins rhyming/doubling pattern:
 invites us to make judgments re: chars: make comparisons:
 Edith / sister-in-law: standing together:
 Edith with dog: neglecting her child-bearing obligations
 sister-in-law with baby: upholding them
 lets film champion positive benefits of reproduction:
 among wealthy educated elite:
 eugenics: advocated fertility control: certain segments of society:
 immigrants, people of color, the poor:
 threat to white America
 strongly encouraged reproduction for better classes
 President Theodore Roosevelt: 1905: popularized term:
 "race suicide": to describe this demographic discrepancy
 Edith's decision to remain childless:
 judged within framework of this argument
 silent exchange of glances between Richard & Edith:
 signals intensity of subject of children for them:
 but they don't speak of their loss between themselves
 as story progresses: we learn more re: her actions:
 discrepancy: between what we know & what Richard knows:
 he has no idea she doesn't want children:
 thinks she shares his anguish
 film: organized around his controlling POV:
 what he fails to see: as important as what he does see
 Edith & Richard isolated in frame for rest of sequence:
 Edith: no interest in child
 Richard: dotes on brother's baby
 Richard: looks out window at neighbor's family:
 powerful metaphor for loss he perceives
 returns to window thruout film:
 only at end: Edith turns to look: too late

Richard's desire to father children: paired with his public role as D.A.:

Richard: at trial: doctor accused of disseminating contraceptive info:

Dr. Homer's trial: indicative of Margaret Sanger case:

Sanger: US's most visible advocate of reproductive freedom:

previous year: 1915: indicted for advocating contraception:

headline-grabbing case across nation

fled US to avoid prosecution:

returned in 1916: speaking tour

opened 1st birth control clinic in NYC:

cops arrested her after 9 days of operation:

served 30-day prison sentence

Dr. Homer's objection: he's being tried for circulating indecent literature:

refers to common practice: filing obscenity charges vs.:

advocates of family planning:

clearly alludes to Sanger's own indictment

Dr. Homer's treatise on birth control: "voluntary motherhood":

puts it in context of eugenics: c/u of book page explains:

how birth control can rid society of evils:

proper family planning: can rid world of crime

film presents arguments: couples like Waltons should reproduce

but: not those who are "undisciplined" / "uncivilized":

puts it squarely in line with eugenics

trial: Homer's use of phrase: "slaughter of the unborn":

frames abortion in negative terms:

theme: developed later in char: Edith Walton

Homer: in his defense: offers 3 stories from his own experience:

case histories: people in desperate need of reproductive control:

1. impoverished families: kids exposed to disease & death

2. unwed mothers: without support of male partners:

then driven to suicide & infanticide

3. couples: dangerously alcoholic: kids endangered

in each f/b: kids' suffering is emphasized:

not women's desire for reproductive freedom

f/b's: form nexus of Homer's argument in favor of birth control:

but they do this: not by giving women voice:

medical expert Homer:

his testimony stands in for their voices

Mrs. Carlo: Edith's friend: "visited by a little soul waiting to be born":
 another wealthy, childless, idle woman: "privileged whiteness":
 set vs. Homer's examples: misery Mrs. Carlo feels:
 can't compare to poverty, disease, death we see in f/b's
 she's introduced: crosscutting: to trial: invites comparison:
 openness of courtroom / secretiveness of women:
 court: men make reproductive decisions
 behind scenes: privileged women:
 take recourse in illegal abortion
 her friends: social calendar & parties: more important than childrearing:
 film condemns these women: for not conceiving:
 trial: birth control favored for poor, marginalized
 this "double stance": rich should propagate, poor should not:
 shows influence of eugenics
 different from Sanger's approach: all should have access
 poor women: should be able to limit size of family
 rich women: should have kids: they're selfish not to:
 abortion separated from birth control
 Dr. Homer's conviction: happens just as:
 Edith & Mrs. Carlo decide to visit Dr. Malfit:
 juxtaposition suggests:
 forward-thinking doctors: punished
 less scrupulous ones: profited
 crosscutting:
 Mrs. Carlo's abortion / Richard's return home: kids next door:
 story: passes judgment on women for evading motherhood
 shows how excluded Richard is from decisions:
 how tragically unaware he is of her actions
 condemns women: having abortions:
 men: Richard & kids' father: dote on children
 Edith: cavalier attitude: yarns: condemns her further
 poignant image: angel:
 "unwanted soul" going back to heaven

Edith's brother & housekeeper's daughter Lillian:

subplot adds dimension to theme of unplanned pregnancy

Lillian's story: can be compared to Homer's example: unwed mother:

comparisons of Lillian & Edith's brother: class privilege

gazes of men compared: 2 contrary uses of class privilege:

Edith's brother: lusts for her: exploitive gaze

Richard: looks upon her as daughter: benevolent gaze

both Edith & brother: selfishly interested in sexuality: beyond reproduction

film: contrasts Lillian's unplanned pregnancy & subsequent abortion:

with those of Edith & her wealthy friends:

sets Lillian's sexual naivete vs.

Edith sophisticated navigation of abortion process

suggested in film: abortion: consequence of unbridled passion

conservative elements in film: fears it voices re:

female sexuality

population growth: poor, immigrants, etc.

Lillian's abortion & death: now she's alone: reinforced thru framing:

if death is Lillian's punishment for sexual transgression:

it's also Edith's punishment as well:

she's held accountable for Lillian's death:

not her brother or Dr. Malfit

rhymes / doubles:

2 pregnancies / 2 abortions / 2 doctors / 2 trials

2 trials: Dr. Homer's trial: looks sympathetically at him: uses him to push eugenics

Dr. Malfit's trial: he & patients: accorded no understanding at all

crosscutting: public prosecution of Malfit / women gathered in Edith's living room:

women: worried secrets will be exposed: which they are

also exposed: Richard's blindness to events:

in his own household, his own marriage, his own bedroom

WHERE: film's censorship history: movie depicting topic that's illegal:
 National Board of Censorship: undergoing challenging phase:
 formed 8 years earlier: amidst concern for content of movies
 by 1910: Board looking at most films before release
 situation changed:
 1915: US Supreme Court ruled: movies not covered by right to free speech:
 so legal to censor them: as result:
 1916: Board changed name to National Board of Review:
 emphasizing classification: over censorship: diminished status
 NBR: at 1st: passed WHERE: then held screening for notables: vice crusader:
 panel convened: unusual: following panel:
 NBR: reversed decision: rejected WHERE:
 confusion re: abortion & contraception
 medical misinformation
 mixed messages
 compromise sought: no resolution
 Universal: defied NBR: opened WHERE in NYC:
 convened their own panel of experts
 ran ads: citing endorsements, film's popular appeal, etc.
 press coverage added to sensation
 by 2nd week of film's run: patrons being turned away: sold-out screenings:
 Universal: quickly put WHERE into national release
 campaign: huge success
 local & state agencies: also looked at films to be released:
 PA: film "visualizes in revolting detail the subject of birth control"
 made lots of cuts: which were made: film resubmitted:
 rejected: banned in state: but this was unusual
 film: drew large audiences across country: 1916:
 just when Sanger embarked on nationwide speaking tour:
 broke b.o. records everywhere
 final image: ghostly specters of unrealized children:
 haunt Richard & Edith:
 metaphor: where are my children?: film's rallying cry:
 ghosts of films lost to history:
 especially: Weber's own lost films

next week:

April 11:
 week #2

Women Directors during the Hollywood Studio Era:
 Dorothy Arzner
 Ida Lupino
 Screening: **THE BIGAMIST** (Ida Lupino, 1953)