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**YVONNE RAINER FILMS:**  
**CORPOREALITY, PERFORMANCE, FEMALE SUBJECTIVITY**

**Selen KILINÇ**  
**118617016**

**Advisor**  
**Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ebru Çiğdem Thwaites Diken**

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Yvonne Rainer Films: Corporeality, Performance, Female Subjectivity

Yvonne Rainer Filmleri: Bedensellik, Performans, Kadın Öznelliđi

Selen KILINÇ  
118617016

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ebru

Çiğdem Thwaites Diken

(İMZA) .....

İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi

Jüri Üyesi: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ayşegül

Kesirli Unur

(İMZA) .....

İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi

Jüri Üyesi: Prof. Dr. Selçuk Göldere

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Ankara Devlet Konservatuarı

(İMZA) .....

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at how female subjectivities emerge in Yvonne Rainer's films at three levels: at the level of director, at the level of the representation of women characters, at the level of women spectators. Her synthesis of movement both in her performance and filmmaking shows her self-reflexive attitude. Thus I analyzed the questions of how Rainer's representation of performing bodies allows for possible female subjectivities by building a corporeal relation with the spectator. I analyze this question at three levels; at the level of director's identity as a female experimental filmmaker and performer at the same time and how it allows for female subjectivities in her filmmaking; at the level of character, i.e., representations of women; at the level of the spectator's relation with the screen and how her filmmaking affects spectators embodied relationship. I examined her films, "*Trio A*", "*Lives of Performers*", "*A Film About a Woman Who...*" and "*Privilege*" to illustrate all three chapters.

Keywords: self-reflexive, experimental, feminism, avant-garde, phenomenology



## ÖZET

Bu tez, Yvonne Rainer'in filmlerinde kadın öznelliklerinin üç düzeyde nasıl ortaya çıktığını incelemektedir: yönetmen düzeyinde, kadın karakterlerin temsili düzeyinde, kadın izleyiciler düzeyinde. Hem performansında hem de film yapımında hareket sentezi, Rainer'ın kendine dönüşlü tavrını gösteriyor. Böylelikle, Rainer'in bedenleri temsil biçimi, seyirciyle bedensel bir ilişki kurarak olası kadın öznelliklerine nasıl izin verdiğine dair alan açıyor. Bu bağlamda tezimi üç düzeyde analiz ettim; bir kadın deneysel film yapımcısı ve oyuncu olarak yönetmenin kimliğinin, film yapımında kadın öznelliklerine nasıl izin verdiğini; karakter düzeyinde kadın temsillerine nasıl alan açtığını; izleyicinin bedensel algısı ile film ve oyuncu ile ilişkisinin, izleyicinin kendi bedeni üzerinden somutlaştırarak nasıl ilişki kurduğunu. Üç bölümü de anlatmak için "*Trio A*", "*Lives of Performers*", "*A Film About a Woman Who...*" ve "*Privilege*" filmlerini inceledim.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kendine dönüşlü, deneysel, feminism, avant-garde, fenomenoloji

## INTRODUCTION

Yvonne Rainer's work has interested me for several reasons. She is a performer and dancer herself; she has taught performance to students and she directed films about performance. She has also acted and performed in some of her films. As such, she has been behind the camera and in front of the camera at the same time. This, therefore, led to my first question, how did her filmmaking on performance was affected by her performer identity? Why did she film the performance?

From these two starting points, a key concept in my thesis emerged and I focused on Rainer's self-reflexive approach which means 'referring to oneself', as she makes her life the subject of her narrative and considered her films as her autobiography. She also experimented with movements in dance and combined her choreography techniques in film. Thus, she made experimental films to experiment with both movement and filmmaking simultaneously. This made me think about how experimental film enabled her to represent performance and performing female bodies in alternative ways (that are different than Hollywood narrative cinema). Her focus on the body expanded throughout the time and she became conscious about her own feminist tendencies. Subsequently, I consider how she subverts the male gaze in her experimental films.

Thereby, I identified my second key concept; "experimental film". When I started to think about Rainer's filmmaking style, I realized that her filmmaking style is informed by her ideas on performance (e.g. minimalism, ventriloquism, non-identification). Moreover, from the perspective of the audience, Rainer's filmmaking style with her focus on the body and movement brings the concept of kinesthesia to the center. The spectator watches Rainer's films not only with their eyes but also with their skin and ears. Therefore, I decided to look at phenomenology. I delved into how she enabled the audience to embody the perspective of the performer and how the sensation of moving while watching is achieved in her films. Considering that she is a performer who is aware of movement precisely, her usage of cinematic tools captured my attention and I became curious about how she involves the audience in the film with these approaches.

With these key concepts in mind, I formulated a research question. 'How does Yvonne Rainer's identity as a female experimental film-maker and a performer allow for female subjectivities in her film-making?' I focused on three levels in my thesis; the director (How Rainer films performance as being a performer); the characters (the representation of the performance of women's bodies); the spectator (how Rainer's filmmaking creates embodied effects on the spectator). Each of these three points constitutes the material of each chapter.

In chapter I, my focus is oriented around her performer and dancer identity. Being a performer herself, I pointed out that Rainer has a self-reflexive approach to filmmaking on performance. I extensively researched her biography, focusing on her upbringing; relationships, how her paths crossed in film and dance. I also provide an overview of Avant-garde movements and its predecessors; futurism, dadaism, surrealism, abstract expressionism, Fluxus, Happenings, performance art, and experimental film. This way, I can illustrate the cumulative evolution of art within the avant-garde movement of the time. I specifically talked about Cunningham and Cage who are the main influences on Rainer. Her understanding of choreography and film draws upon these two influences. Afterward, I explained how her understanding of dance took shape and how she turned into a professional dancer and choreographer. The period where she initiated Judson Dance Theatre along with others was important. Around the time she declared her famous 'No Manifesto', she choreographed and danced for her noteworthy work 'Trio A'. Alongside this, she conducted research on performance art and started teaching performance. After producing her first multi-media work, she quitted dancing and started a new career in filmmaking.

In the second chapter, I focus on the representation issues of female bodies on stage and screen. In order to understand how Rainer, as a female performer and director, represented women on screen, I focused on feminism. Thus, I explained how she represented a female body from the female point of view. I keep the question in mind 'How does she represent female bodies in ways that are different than conventional fiction?' So there was a need to focus on the experimental film too. I specifically dealt with the question of representation; I did a literature review including Mulvey, Kaplan, Smelik and etc. in order to give a background on the issues the representation of women. So, I focused on how the male gaze has evolved in art history and cinema. I specifically focused on questions that are related to experimental film. It was significant to comprehend why Rainer choose the experimental genre, to represent women's bodies by subverting the male gaze. Furthermore, I wondered, what is different in terms of representation in experimental film? How are Rainer's films experimental? With, what does she experiment? Why did Rainer choose an experimental film? I highlighted these throughout the chapter. I realized that creating movement structure and filmmaking process have a similar core and experimental film was the unifying area for both. Thus, literature on experimental films and examples from Rainer's films was included in this part.

Furthermore, I connected prominent features of Avant-garde and performance art to Rainer's representation of women on stage. This part includes literature on Morse, Banes, to name a few. Specifically, I focused on her performance 'Words Word' which is performed nearly naked. It is a good example of how she neutralizes gender as well as underlining the difference between naked and nude. In this way, I aimed to understand Rainer's female director's gaze, which connects to the

melodrama genre. Because Rainer specifically chooses melodrama, which is a gendered genre and I wondered what Rainer intended to achieve? How does Rainer subvert the very gendered genre, melodrama? I gave details about the genre itself and illustrated how Rainer reinvented this genre in her own manner.

As I elaborated on the issue of gaze and understood how Rainer subverts the male gaze, I researched how her films refer to audial and haptic sensations rather than gaze in the third chapter. Through the phenomenological relationship that is enabled with the senses in her films, she creates a kinesthetic experience for the audience. Therefore, I illustrated how Rainer's experimental films and directorial approach involve the audience in a narrative that is different than the classical narrative film. In this respect, my core focus was on phenomenology. I gave details about how our perception is addressed continuously from the outer world and how our senses play an important role in selecting what we perceive. In that sense, our body has the utmost importance in our thought process and perception, which makes our perception vulnerable to any stimuli. Therefore, Rainer refers to the spectator's bodily response and let them embody the perspective of the performer in the film, through their body. Rainer's approach to interrupt between preconditioned senses of the audience is related to her interest in breaking the identification of the character. In this respect, I elaborated on the kind of methods and cinematic tools Rainer used in her films, the representation of bodily stimuli, and the kind of filmic devices she used in the narrative. Subsequently, I aimed to understand how bodily senses lead the audience to respond and involve to film with their body instead of intellectually.

In order to illustrate all three chapters, in the fourth chapter I analyzed her filmic style, visual tendencies, narrative elements, prop usage, camera movements, written text usage, and distancing devices by giving details on the scenes that I choose. While analyzing her films I kept the discussions in my focus. In the light of the discussions above, I examined her films; "Trio A", "Lives of Performers", "A Film About a Woman Who", and "Privilege". I draw prominent points from each chapter and gave detailed examples from the scenes of each film.

In short, I cumulatively depict about Rainer's personal and professional life while contextualizing her in the era she is living. I explore and elaborate on the many identities of Yvonne in my writing journey: dancer, performer, choreographer, filmmaker, intellect, feminist, and innovator, as is mentioned in the documentary (*Feelings Are Facts: The Life of Yvonne Rainer*, 2015). Hence, in the following chapters, you will come across different layers of Yvonne Rainer which united under the identity of a filmmaker.

## 1. WOMEN BEHIND THE SCREEN: YVONNE RAINER

The biographical details of Yvonne Rainer, the development of her intellectual identity is very significant to understand her approach to performance and filmmaking. In this section, I explain how she grew up to be a performer and a filmmaker and argue that her identity as a performer has endowed Yvonne Rainer with a self-reflexive attitude towards film-making on performance, dance and her approach to choreography. As a film director, Rainer presents her understanding of performing bodies, through her background, as a dancer and performer. She is familiar with movement, emotion, and rhythm in the body, as well as the nature of performance. This way of seeing also affects her point of view as a director. Her focus on improvisation, kinesiological analysis, and vocal work especially reflect the direct connection between the representation of the body on stage and on screen.

Yvonne Rainer is an extraordinary and multi-disciplinary artist whose works and lifestyle had reflected the spirit of her time, which was encompassed by avant-garde and experimental art movements. Her way of living and creating art has a focus on breaking whatever is conventional and bring everyday life into art. As she said, she was “*tearing away the facade of artificiality*” (Rich, 1989, p.1) by going beyond what is conventional.

It is important to say a few words on the term ‘self-reflexive’ to better contextualize my argument. Reflexive etymologically means ‘*reflective, capable of turning back*’ which has its roots in the terms ‘reflect’ and ‘reflex’. ‘Reflex’ refers to ‘*involuntary nerve stimulation*’ and ‘self’ refers to *oneself* and *automatic*. In that sense, self-reflexive means referring to oneself or automatically referencing the self. Also, Schechner defines reflexive as “*referring back to oneself or itself*” (2002). As the “*reflexivity has been at the heart*” of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s writings (Gingras, 2010), Bourdieu defines reflexivity as; “*reflexivity understood as the scientific objectivation of the subject of objectivation*” (2004, p. 63). The way the term ‘reflexivity’ is defined by Bourdieu made it gain a self-referent quality like “*the sociology of sociology*”. Bachelard defines it as “*intellectual surveillance of oneself*”. Hence, it is possible to say that self-reflexive analysis objectifies the researcher's position by “*referring to oneself*” (Gingras, 2010). As I will elaborate, in her filmmaking, Yvonne Rainer constantly referred to herself as a performer.

A few insights as to Yvonne Rainer’s personality can be given as follows; her personal life has always been an initial point of her artistic endeavors as she frequently mentions such connections in her autobiography, “*Feelings are Facts*” (2006). When Yvonne was born in San Francisco on November 24, 1934, her mother was a 38-year-old who gave her second birth (Rainer, 2006). Her brother, Ivan, was 4 years older. Her mother suffered from postpartum depression and, 4 years after

Yvonne was born, she sent them to boarding school, which caused trauma for Yvonne and raise unanswered questions “*Why mama gave us away?*” and “*How daddy could let her do it?*” (2006, p.29). In her third feature film, “*Kristina Talking Pictures*” which she shot in 1976, she addressed her mother; “*My mother lying on the couch... she was always laying, father was always sitting*” (2006, p.47). The last remaining memory about her mother before she passed away in 1975 is that she has had Alzheimer's for 15 years, and the song Yvonne sang to when she saw her last time before she died was the same song that her mother used to sing to her when she was little. Yvonne was shaken by the weight of this loss for a while, and she even took a 4-year break in her directing life (Rainer, 2006).

Her parents were Italian, and both of them were Polish-Jewish, working-class immigrants (Rainer, 2006). “*Her parents were anarchists, this evoked a 'habitual anarchist' attitude in her films*” (Petrolla & Wexman, 2005). At age 16, after she hitchhiked around LA with her friends, she felt alienated from her father. Her father was someone who said that women should have a certain type of place in society (Rainer, 2006). However, he also introduced Yvonne, Art House Films which led her to start working at the Cinema Guild as a ticket vendor. In this period, she watched many vanguard films of its time like Cocteau's (avant-garde film-maker) “*Orpheus*”, movies of Jean Renoir (unconventional approach to film), Jean Vigo (poetic realism), Buster Keaton (poetic and anti-artistic approach), and some Hollywood melodramas led her to deploy Hollywood noir clips in one of her films called “*Man Who Envied Woman*” (1985). Later, she implemented the editing technique of Maya Deren's “*At Land*”, in her “*Kristina Talking Pictures*”. As a result, she enrolled in a 16mm filmmaking course at the San Francisco Art Institute without foreseeing her career as a filmmaker (Rainer, 2006).

As her rebellious spirit evolved, she dropped out of college at the age of 18 and started living alone. Her first long relationship was with John Bott and they moved Chicago. In her letter to Ivan, she mentioned that she hated Chicago (Rainer, 2006). I contend that it was a reflection of her relationship with him. Yvonne encountered sexist dialogues of Bott's friends on multiple occasions. She reflected her insights about this period in one of her performances “*Inner Appearances*” in 1972 (Rainer, 2006). Later she came back to San Francisco in 1953, met with Mike and Sally. Yvonne was the babysitter of their kids and had an affair with Mike, which approved by Sally. Sally was a speech teacher and helped Yvonne to fix her lisp. Also, they watched Mike Redgrave's “*Day of Wrath*” and “*Dead of Night*” together, in which he portrays a ventriloquist (Rainer, 2006). She was mesmerized. Ventriloquism is an illusion in which, a voice seems like it's coming from somewhere else. Later, Yvonne used ventriloquism as a technique in her performances and films, which makes her voice a distinctive element.

In 1955, at the age of twenty-one, she met with Al Held, an expressionist painter whom she followed to New York. In their four years relationship, his vision and the environment as well as getting involved to the world of Avant-garde in New York influenced Yvonne. However, Al was a macho man and his friend's sexist comments affected her. She said: “*The mind-body/male-female dichotomies were constantly rearing their heads*”. The comments were as follows; “*Man is from abstraction (mind) and women are from cows (body)*” (Rainer, 2006, p.158). Yvonne said that she could not comprehend the effect of these events not until she began working within the second wave of feminism after the 1970s. Still, New York meant more to her. She started taking acting classes at Herbert Berghof's school in 1956. But she did not get along with Stanislavski's method of acting which requires an illusion to generate the emotion (Rainer, 2006). Presumably, her opposite attitude towards the illusion affected her to use movements from daily life in her future performance and film works.

As a matter of fact, her discovery of not being a good mimetic actor enabled her to discover her “*strong stage presence*” which Robert Rauschenberg later remarked; “*She can't do much but she has terrific stage presence*” (Rainer, 2006, p.167). Simultaneously her friend introduced to the dance classes of Edith Stephen which opened a new door to the world of dance and performance. Yvonne practiced a variety of modern dance techniques such as Limon, Graham, African, and improvisation. In 1958, three events had changed the direction of her life, her father passed away; the piece of Graham “*Here and Now with Watchers*” awakened some unusual feelings. She was amazed by her 'ordinary walk' in her choreography and led her to start classes with Graham. In the same night, Al forced her into sex and when she declined, he raped her (Rainer, 2006). She acknowledged the intensity of this incident, years later while becoming a feminist.

When she started living alone, she continued a strict practice for a year at Graham's studio; she participated in two modern and ballet classes per day (Rainer, 2006). Even though Graham established modern dance in America, her technique was highly conventional and theatrical. In 1960, after she watched Cunningham's “*Antic Meet*” and “*Changeling*”, she was impressed deeply and shifted her attention towards the nexus of Cunningham-Cage school by quitting Graham's aesthetic. Cunningham's motto “*dance for its own sake*” and Cage's technique “*chance method*” affected Yvonne profoundly (O'Brien, 2015). Chance Method is the technique that is based on Zen Buddhism and randomness, enabling Cage and Cunningham to dismiss their 'egos' from the creation process. In order to do that they choose elements for their artworks and let other factors find their place in the work while eliminating traditional approaches (Fırıncioğlu, 2011). Yvonne's rebellion

against what is conventional began to rise. As John Myers, the director of the Tibor de Nagy Gallery said; “*Devotion to finding the truth of the Body*”, became her focus in the following years (Rainer, 2006). The same year she already developed her technique through the influences of Simone Forti, Anne Halprin, Robert Dune, and James Waring which I will elaborate upon in the chapter of ‘*Performance to Film*’. In 1962, as a result of the course of Dunn, students presented their works at Judson Memorial Church (Banes, 1993). This was also the start of an organization. The group that is formed from the course of Dunn; started open classes, workshops, and events at Judson Church, after having an opening with the event “*Concert of Dance*” (Rainer, 2006).

In 1963, Yvonne presented her first ‘evening-length work’, “*Terrain*”. At the same time, Judson was slowly coming to the end as a natural result of the diversity of dancers in 1964 (Banes, 1993). Each dancer went slowly on their way. At the end of the same year, Yvonne came across Bob Morris -a former husband of Simone Forti- at a party. They got close and their long-lasting story had begun. She says: “*The first time, I had allowed a sexual partner to embed himself so deeply in my psyche*” (Rainer, 2006, p. 237). He was a painter, minimalist sculptor, and later he did performances with sculpture and choreography. They lived, created and socialized together, took place in the same events, performed together, go on tours together, and “*Their interaction on stage was intense*” (Öhrner, 2016). In this period, Yvonne produced many notable works including her noteworthy performance “*Trio A*” and declared her famous “*No Manifesto*” (Rainer, 2006). However, Morris had a flirtatious personality which was unbearable for Yvonne. Additionally, her health problems that occurred around the 1970s lasted for nearly 2 years and it affected the entire life of Yvonne, including her relationship with Morris. It was difficult to continue dancing; her focus was on performance mostly, concentrated on choreography and later in 1972, totally to film.

Meanwhile, she started teaching and exploring the art of teaching. She considered “*teaching as a form of performance*” and expanded her research under the title of ‘*performance demonstrations*’ (Rainer, 2006, p.313). She also went deeper in her researches on film and media. She combined slide and film projections into performances. Her first multi-media work “*Rose Fractions*” had premiered in 1969 (Rainer, 2006). In this period, she was also researching a new project with a group of dancers and colleagues. She adapted her first minimalist performance, “*The Mind is a Muscle*” from 1965 —also the first part of the “*Trio A*”— to her new project “*Continuous Project - Altered Daily*”. She was focused on ‘*spontaneous behavior*’ (Rainer, 2006). The group was united by a variety of dancers; some of whom were from the Judson time. It was named “*Yvonne Rainer and Group*”. In 1970, as a group decision, this name upgraded to “*Grand Union*”. After a point, the definition between ‘*performance*’ and ‘*rehearsal*’ became thinner. Yvonne let the dancers explore and improvise *her material* with their improvisational instinct. However, this caused her authority



gradually disappear. As she said: “*It seemed that once one allowed the spontaneous expression and responses and opinions of performers to affect one’s own creative process...There was no chance to go back to the old hierarchy of director and directed*” (Rainer, 2006, p.322). In 1971 Yvonne went on a trip to India. When she came back she did one last performance with the group. Simultaneously, she expressed “*her dissatisfaction with mixed media*” (Rich, 1989, p.2). When she completed her first feature film “*Lives of Performers*” in 1972, she was already moved out from the group and GU continued to perform until 1976.

### **1.1. The Early Period of Avant-garde in Performance**

The 70s Avant-Garde movement, of which Yvonne is a part, has a history dating back to the early 20th century including futurism, dadaism, surrealism, abstract expressionism, pop art, symbolism, Bauhaus, Fluxus, Happenings, and performance art. Before mentioning how Rainer’s works take place in the 70s Avant-garde movement, I intend to shed light on how the historical evaluation of this movement in the context of performing arts and cinema, without undertaking the effort to explain ‘what is Avant-garde’ (Sell, 2010). To this end, in what follows I explain the history and the artistic background which influenced the performance of Yvonne Rainer and particularly her relationship with Cunningham and Cage; as they were the main influence on Judson Church Group of which Yvonne Rainer was a part.

The conception of art for society and art for art was a discussion that has neither been accepted nor rejected by avant-garde movements as Lyotard said. Both of these options were not convincing or valid for the art of the Avant-garde (Sztabiński, 2017). Instead, Avant-garde aimed to destroy the institutionalized understanding of art by cleansing the art from all kinds of attachments such as; form, structure, institution in which the art field bonded, and the role of the audience. In particular, it criticized the political structure of its time, opposes traditions, and removes the bridge between art disciplines (Yılmaz, 2011). Therefore, as a movement, Avant-garde can be called timeless; it preserves its feature of challenging the structure of the age that it is in, with the purpose of liberating art.

The questioning of art in terms of form, theory, and content began with futurism, dadaism, and surrealism, which were the first -and historical- avant-garde movements after WWI (Yılmaz, 2011). These movements reflected the aim of integrating art with life, by attacking art institutes, remove the distinction between art and daily life, call out individual consciousness, examine the body and every element on the stage separately (Candan, 1994). In this context, they began to make radical

changes both on the stage and in the audience. For instance, disturbing the audience or causing a shock to break the illusion of the performance was an effective method to change the human behavior. Thus, instead of pointing and representing reality, they make the disturbance real (Sztabiński, 2017).

The concept of '*Gesamtkunstwerk*' (art disciplines united under one purpose to create a unified piece) emerged with Wagner at the end of the 19th century just before the avant-garde movement had begun (Candan, 1994). Although these unified understandings of art accept the branches of art separately, the theory that '*art is for art*' was still a dominant concept in the 19th century. As Schechner gives some details about the history of Avant-garde, he mentions two approaches; 'art like art', and 'lifelike art', which positions art within or without life. While Avant-garde *art like art* encompasses traditionally separated genres of art, like music, dance, literature, theatre, and the visual arts; *lifelike art* rejects all the codifications in these arts and embraces ordinary life (Schechner, 2002). It can be said that Avant-garde movements embark on new quests in the context of the integrity of the work of art, as Cunningham did in dance. Cunningham took the understructure of ballet and united it with the '*concept of chance*' which will be explained in the following paragraphs. Hence, a new understanding has emerged in dance as a new version of the old. "*The avant-garde defines itself as "cutting edge," as breaking rules in order to discover new ways of doing things. But a close examination of the history of the avant-garde reveals mostly replays and variations on known themes and procedures rather than actual newness*" (Schechner, 2002, p.250).

The first avant-garde trend that reflects the spirit of its time is futurism. It emphasizes the downsizing of humans against the machines of the industrial revolution. Thus, it says that art is commodified (Candan, 1994). The futurists aim to break the illusion of the stage against the commodification of the body, setting, and context. For instance, the stage decor is minimized in order to focus only on a certain number of situations on stage. The aim of capturing the real-life on the stage, they improvise occasionally on stage. The ensuing movement, expressionism has begun to play with duration after futurism. Expressionists change the perception of continuity by creating a kind of dream-like sequence. They also used different tempos for words and movements in order to change the balance of the piece. In this movement, concepts of abstraction, identification, and alienation were used to question the audience-performer relationship that was stereotyped (Candan, 1994).

On the other hand, dadaists, who set out with a nihilistic perspective, made improvised performances in which different disciplines were combined and created an overflowing expression

style. After a while, the artists working in this field formalized the movement by choosing the word *dada*, which means “*rocking horse*” in French, instead of being called nihilist (Candan, 1994). Dadaists aim to create conflict between the audience and the artist. That's why they radically made “*a direct reference to reality*” (Sztabiński, 2017). The elimination of all ties between reality and artwork by fundamentally negating it, can be observed in Marcel Duchamp's industrial *ready-made* works. Dadaism can also be observed in the works of Cage who was one of the influential figures of The 1950s and he cleared off the borders between different art disciplines. Cage was also a supporter of Duchamp's approach to art and affected the *Fluxus* movement which has a leading effect on the performance art (Toprak, 2017).

Surrealism emerged as a movement that indicates the subconscious rebellion of the Parisian audience after the war. Andre Breton, who published the surrealist manifesto, had already been affected by Freud's psychoanalytic methods (Candan, 1994). Thus Surrealism encompassed the development of the psychological period of its time while it carried the effects of Dada. This psychological approach was also the continuation of the line that includes Political/Epic Theater. According to this, Brecht, the father of epic theater, aimed to break Wagner's holistic understanding of art and to carry the audience's moment of catharsis after the play instead of at the end of the play, that is, to put it into a psychological process which continues even after the play ends. Afterward, Artaud continued surrealism with the idea that theater and life are *twins* of each other. Although Artaud could not actualize his ideas in the 1920s, his surrealist theories came alive in the second half of Avant-garde, with “*The Living Theater*” established in 1951 (Candan, 1994). In my opinion, the aim to remove the distinction between life and art is similar to the disappearance of the borders between consciousness and the unconscious, which can be understood as the basic idea put forward by surrealism. As Ayşın Candan states, this makes surrealism the “*longest-running movement of the avant-garde*” (1994).

*At the same moment, visual artists and dancers were moving away from the image of the detached artist or choreographer and the disembodied work of art to focus on the creative body—the artist's body as the work of art: spontaneous, corporeal, fully present. Inspired by an avant-garde performance-art tradition that stretched back to Dada, innovative new art forms included the dance of Merce Cunningham and Yvonne Rainer... (McKenzie, 2005)*

Simultaneously with these movements, certain names in the dance world were busy changing the perspectives towards the understanding of the body. Cubist, futuristic, and modern influences began to appear in dance (O'Brien, 2015). Isadora Duncan, the pioneer of 20th-century modern dance,

which broke the stereotypes on the female body, aimed to liberate her body as a woman at the beginning of the Avant-garde movement. Her expression was a political rebellion and it can be said that the first seeds of the feminist movement were sown (O'Brien, 2015). She broke rigid conventions and common patterns in classical ballet while performing the "*Dance of the Future*" with bare feet, throwing away all the costumes that keep the female body in form and instead wore an ancient-like Greek tunic -baggy dresses- (O'Brien, 2015). Her approach to dance highly intertwined with the exploration of a return to primitive sources (Copeland, 2004). She researched impulses that emerged through improvisation. The way she used her body was an inspiration to her successor Graham, who also embraced a primitive return to nature through the body (Copeland, 2004).

Martha Graham, who was the pioneer of modern dance in America in 1937, paved the way for contemporary dance in particular. She developed techniques to change the stereotypical structure of ballet, which was ruled by masculine forces thus far. Her attention directed towards the utterance of the female body, she focused on the womb as the center of the body and developed a movement technique that has a focus on breathing and it circulated from the center (O'Brien, 2015). Her dance was narrative-based and theatrical. She believed that modern dance has a direct connection with the primitive. Moreover, in order to get rid of the chaos of her age, a primitive approach was needed. "*The long tradition of modern dance that extends from Duncan through Graham almost always rejected the 'mess of urban life' by reaching back 'toward something primitive'*" (Copeland, 2004). In this sense, Graham's ultimate guide to the primitive was her body, as she said "*The body never lies*".

Pre-Cunningham modern dancers focused on the "*primordial way of moving*" in search of the natural self (Copeland, 2004). Cunningham, as Graham's student, was in search of pure movement; hence he researched bodily expressions that were free from emotion, which could only be achieved with dance (O'Brien, 2015). As Copeland said; "*Cunningham creates dances for people who not only like dancing but who wants to do something unique for dancing: to provide them with experiences that can be obtained in no other way*" (2004). In 1953 he left Graham school and founded his own company to pursue his views on dance efficiently. In order to do that, he started working to purge movement in dance from everything else and to achieve "*impersonal sensibility detachment*" (Copeland, 2004).

Cunningham met Cage, who would become a life and work partner when he was a dance student. They made productions together during their union, which started in 1945 (Fırıncioğlu, 2011). For this reason, the philosophies that they hold on to cannot be separated from each other. Their most

effective approach was “*the chance method*”. They called their researches “*chance operations*” that are identified with the Eastern Mysticism and Zen Buddhism which affected the period of the time. As Dadaists are familiar with the Tao Te Ching, 1960’s Avant-garde art world embraced mystical systems as well (Banes, 1993). Cage used this method, which was connected to ‘*the I-Ching*’, for the first time in his musical compositions. *The I-Ching*, also known as the book of changes, is half Chinese philosophy, half divination. Cage said that he uses this method only when he needs it in order to choose from certain factors. Cunningham implemented the same method in dance as Cage did in music. Their common goal was to even partially disable their individuality, egos, and tastes in order to allow the rest of the artwork to form itself. “*Zen or other mystical systems, chance, collage, automatism, and other methods were ways to free oneself from the tyranny of the self; to put oneself freely in the larger stream of the cosmos*” (Banes, 1993, p.63). They also believed that the creative process should flow by itself while they are asking questions instead of making choices (Fırıncıoğlu, 2011). Cage summarized his thoughts by, “*Intention of making his work non-intention*” and “*no desire to express ideas & feeling, instead of opening his mind what is outside of his mind*” (O’Brien, 2015). Also, Cage focuses on the fertility of emptiness, especially in his short film “4’33”. The initial point of his short is “*Everything we do is music*” which shows that he emphasized the importance of focusing on the creation process, not the emerging work (Toprak, 2017). Rainer’s approach to performance is similar to this. Her practices with the Grand Union show that the line between rehearsal and performance is blurred; therefore, the moving body is presented with its all authenticity.

As I mentioned about Cunningham’s pure movement approach; “*Movement is no longer obligated to represent anything other than itself*” (Copeland, 2004). To do this, Cunningham applied two different approaches to dance; along with the chance method, he modernized classical ballet or “*re-balleticizing of modern dance*” in which modern movement intertwined with ballet. He stressed that the combination of the technical background of the ballet as well as the forms of repertoire that preceded and the randomness of *the chance method* could go beyond one’s individual tendencies (Copeland, 2004). I contend that this context is identified with the purification of ego and individuality as in Zen Buddhism. That was the way for Cunningham to *liberate* dance from its traditional dependence and rearrange them in another synthesis (O’Brien, 2015). Just as Copeland asked: “*Who would have guessed that the modernization of modern dance would depend in part on its rapprochement with classical ballet?*” Cunningham broke the perception about the center of the body by isolation and fragmentation. “*Body without organ-ization.*” The body is systematically dismantled, so it can be rearranged randomly (Copeland, 2004). Because he believes that this way he unleashes his imagination (Walker Art Center, 2017).

With Cage, they developed the “*collaboration at a distance*” approach based on the chance method. Each element of the piece; choreography, music, and decor, were separately produced in “*mutual isolation*” and being presented together for the first time on the performance night. It brings the essence of performance onto the stage that is created at the moment and provides the opportunity to experience “*the randomness of chance element*” (Copeland, 2004). “*The way we work together with music, dance and visual; are 3 separate identities, at the moment of performance comes together. In a sense, it is a political thing that is we travel around and present this work allowing us much freedom as possible for everyone at the same time there is this discipline*” (Cunningham, 1995).

The reason why the experimental approach that they caught with isolation and chance method has a political infrastructure was directly proportional to the rapid rise of the consumer society they were in. In the 1950s, there has been an acceleration in advertising in America (Copeland, 2004). With further research in psychology, people were started to be manipulated with the information processed in their subconscious which is manifested in consumption as “*unconscious instinct*”. Precisely with the effect of this reason, Cunningham and Cage started to use methods to purify individuality. They thought, “*impulses that might feel natural, that might appear to originate in the unconscious*” were the source of cultural conditioning (Copeland, 2004). In that sense, I contend that the chance method is proportional to Zen Buddhism. As mindfulness teaches individuals to position themselves at the moment and become aware of themselves so that they cannot be manipulated; Cunningham and Cage aimed for a similar purpose. As Cunningham said about Duchamp; “*He never seems to do anything and yet he was there and he occupied*” (Cunningham, 1995). Also, Cunningham sought pure movement to redefine modern dance, he included movements from everyday life, like pedestrian movements, to his dance vocabulary. When Robert Dunn who was the composer from Cunningham's studio started to give a composition workshop to the Judson group, which Yvonne was, part of in 1962, Cunningham’s research on everyday life movements became a focus in the group (Copeland, 2004). This period was essential for the development of Rainer's dancer identity as a dancer (Rainer, 2006).

Lastly, I believe that Cunningham has his own understanding of wholeness in contrast to Wagnerian 'united art'. Throughout his years of production, he has been deeply connected with video art, visual arts, music and dance; he united them in his own sense. In the '70s and '80s, he was interested in creating dance works specifically to be filmed by a camera along with Charles Atlas & Elliot Caplan (Walker Art Center, 2017). He was particularly interested in the possibilities that came with the camera. In his work “*Beach Birds for the Camera*”, he rearranged choreography from “*Beach Birds*” for the camera (Cunningham, 1995). He saw the camera as part of his choreography rather than just seeing it as a mere witness to the action. He applied experimental strategies like; “*change*

*of perspective, focus on unusual details, adjust scale & tempo, unusual editing technique, image manipulation*” which created a new genre of dance expression. Therefore, Cunningham was already the first dancer who focused on multi-media relations (Walker Art Center, 2017).

The works of Cunningham and Cage destroyed the boundaries between disciplines that were rooted in the early years of the avant-garde. In their period, the effects of the digital age gradually increased, and the interdisciplinarity of film and video elaborated with performing arts in which eventually led to the born of a new medium, performance art. In this respect, both digital and non-digital areas of art have expanded to include performance and cinema. The radical actions that Cunningham took, in my opinion, fed Yvonne's film approach. Her transition to the film world went along with her experimental performance works in which I will elaborate on in the following chapter.

## **1.2. Performance to Film**

In this chapter, I trace the process through which Rainer's career path took a turn from performance to filmmaking. As mentioned above, the main influences in this process were Cunningham and Cage. Before Cunningham; a friend of Al -Al was her boyfriend at the time- invited Rainer to dance classes with Edith Stephen who was teaching the technique of Martha Graham. She was introduced to and trained with other modern dance techniques such as; Limon, African, and improvisation along with Graham. While Yvonne was attending classes at Edith's studio, Merce Cunningham, the prominent name of the period, was renting Edith's studio. He did not have his own studio at that time, and Yvonne watched him for the first time from behind the scenes. Yvonne was affected by Cunningham's approach to dance in which she calls a *“lack of emotion”*, but later discovered that he has the purpose of reflecting the emotion of the body (Rainer, 2006, 170).

In the letter she wrote to her brother, Ivan, in 1959, she talks about what dance means to her. Dance was *“a way of emotional dilemma”* in which the extensity of the training period overwhelms while it enables *“the virtue of salvation through sweat”* (Rainer, 2006, p.181). She enjoyed the hard work that fills up her everyday life, although it also made her *“fill up until her throat sometimes”* (2006, p.181). In either way, dance provided an identity for her, something in which she felt belonging by saying *“I am a dancer.”* The same year she started Graham's beginner's modern dance classes, which continued for a year until she watched Cunningham's performance, and decided to work with him. I believe her interaction with Cunningham sparked the dancer and choreographer identity of Yvonne. *“Cunningham was ‘persona non-grata’* in the modern dance world (2006, p.187). When

she started classes at his studio, she was already aware of how his dance language was time-shifting. He has the “*coordination of a pro and the innocence of an amateur*” (2006, p.189). His moves seemed ordinary but in their own complexity. She was very impressed by his philosophy. Later on, she embraced Cunningham’s minimalist approach by adopting pedestrian movements in her style throughout her Judson time. Yvonne was able to focus on the “*ordinariness*” element from Cunningham's dance approach because she felt it was more adoptable than his ballet-based movement structures. However, her focus on ordinary movement became apparent in her artistic choices around the Judson Dance Theatre times. In the summer of 1960, Yvonne went to Anne Halprin's workshop with Simone Forti, whom she met from the Cunningham's studio (2006).

Simone Forti was another figure who affected her deeply. Her method for dance composition is highly inspired by her. Forti constructed dance phrases by using voice and improvisation (Ross, 2007). She mentions; “*I am indebted to Simone for my awakening as a dancer. I can say that my creative life as a dancer began when I met her*” (Rainer, 2006, p.217). Simone Forti was an Italian-born Jewish woman who grew up in LA and while studying in College met with Robert Morris who will be the posterior lover of Yvonne (Banes, 1993). Forti deepened her dance style with Anne Halprin especially on “*free improvisations, kinesiological analysis and vocal work*” (Banes, 1993, p.10). Later, Yvonne took Anne Halprin's workshop with the recommendation of Forti in 1960 which was improved Yvonne's style as a dancer & choreographer in a variety of ways. Yvonne said; “*Ann gave me my first permissions to use my body and imagination*” (Ross, 2017, p.152). In one of Halprin's 'structured improvisation' assignments, Yvonne used her voice with fragmented words while emptying her bag to expose her personal belongings. Her dancer friend Trisha Brown was charmed by her performance deeply. The memory of Brown also refers to how Yvonne disclosed her private life in public naturally (Ross, 2017).

After the summer with Halprin, Robert Dunn's workshop in 1960 had started with 5 students including Yvonne and Simone (Banes, 1993). Robert Dunn was Cage's student from 'Composition of Experimental Music'. He was a musician who was working as an accompanist for Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham. Cage asked him to conduct a workshop in 1960 at Cunningham's studio on experimental composition for dancers. His lineage of the teaching contained overtones of both Cage's core ideas along with the 60's overflowing cultural perception of Zen Buddhism was encompassed by the art world of the avant-garde (Banes, 1993). In 1961, in a 4000-word long letter to Ivan, Yvonne shared her experience on the inner and outer balance of her life. It was the first time that she decided to “*discover her own movement tendencies*” (Rainer, 2006, p.204). She used the chance element in her performance to create a rhythm as Cage-Cunningham does. She created her first professional piece from the assignment of Dunn’s workshop “*Three Satie Spoons*”, by



using Cage's method from "*Fontana Mix*" (Banes, 1993). She experimented with Cage's chance method on movements by splitting and combining the work. In this context, she included all the composition elements given by Dunn to her dance. Her approach can be observed in her first work "*Three Satie Spoon*" (Ross, 2007). She continued workshops for 2 years (Ross, 2007). In the second year of Dunn's Workshop, she wrote an essay about her movement choices in the three dances that she created for his class; "*I dance about the thing that affects me in a very immediate way*" in which she combines immediate actions with her body's impulses. "*It follows, therefore, that no single dance is about anyone idea or story, but rather about a variety of things that in performance fuse together and decide the nature of the whole experience*" (Banes, 1993, p.14).

Further, in the second year of Dunn's workshop, Rainer choreographed a piece for Trisha Brown and herself called "*Satie for Two*" (Banes, 1993) which was followed by her lost interest in Cagean approach; "*I began to get fed up with all the chance stuff. That seemed to be the end-all. If you made it by chance, then anything was okay*" (Banes, 1993, p.30). Relatively, she had contact with James Waring from the Living Theatre. The Living Theatre has been the "*icons of political theatre.*" The student of Piscator, Judith Maline, established it. Piscator "*wanted the theatre to explode out of the theatre building into the street; to take from real life and surge back into real-life.*" The Living Theatre included the spirit of its time by encompassing Cubism, Surrealism, and Dada, which are the prominent Avant-garde movements of its time (Malina, 2012, p.xvi). It was also the first contact of the "*rise of political consciousness*" for many artists. Coincidentally, it was in the same building where Cunningham's studio located. Around the time, Rainer was participating in Dunn's workshops at Cunningham's studio; James Waring was initiating performances and giving an 'experimental composition class' here as well (Banes, 1993). Having an invitation from James Waring, dissolved Yvonne's conditioned thoughts about herself. She was not finding herself sufficient to take part in any professional company because of her technical inadequacy. In 1961, Rainer started working in Waring's studio. He planned a program in which he asked Yvonne to perform two solos. She performed "*Three Satie Spoons*" and "*The Bells*" that she created at Dunn's workshop (Banes, 1993). After the event at the Living Theatre she said;

*It felt like nothing that I had ever experienced before...My music begins and I am transported into a very special world. I felt beautiful, confident, knowing, proud, completely carried away by the magic of my own gestures and movements. And best of all my technique did not betray me, I could depend on it... I had complete control.* (Rainer, 2006, p. 210)

Afterward, he invited Yvonne for his new piece that will be prepared for the Montreal Arts Festival. Working with him shaped her ideas as a performer and choreographer.

*I discovered my own peculiar nature & feeling about dance. In other words, I was able to bring my own personality into play in carrying out his ideas. I think this is one of the secrets of any halfway decent choreography. (Rainer, 2006, 206)*

During this period, Yvonne began researching how the concepts of 'one-at-a-time' and 'simultaneously' could be in the flow of dance phrases. She focused on fragmenting movement pieces and used the chance method in her own way to arrange them while focusing on doing one thing at a time. Also, she played around with the tempos of different dancers who are doing the same choreography at the same time with different timings. She advanced her method with movement research, in which she questioned "*how to fill the unit with movement: whether to do a particular movement phrase several times, once slowly, or once and then hold for the rest of the musical phrase*" (Banes, 1993, p. 14). By the end of Dunn's course in 1962, students wanted a public event, but the Living Theatre was too small. Rainer suggested using Judson Memorial Church. Each dancer chooses what they want to perform under the umbrella of "*Concert of Dance*" at Judson (Banes, 1993). It was a "*three-hour marathon*" in Yvonne's words (2006, p.222). With the landmark of the event, Judson Memorial Church became a home for dancers. There was enough space to perform as a group, conduct workshops, and classes while focusing on the experimental performance art of their time (Rainer, 2006). It was the time where Yvonne's choreographer-performer side was fully in charge. After this chain reaction of transformations, she pursued her own initiations as a dancer and choreographer, which then led her to reveal her director side on the surface. Her performance approach can be investigated under these keywords; *one thing at a time, simultaneous actions, unit movement, chance method, unpredictable juxtapositions, repetition, unusual positions, social contact, fragmentation, and eccentricity* (Banes, 1993). I contend that these methods became prominent tools for her film-making as well.

Throughout her three-year period of active production and experimentation, the Judson Dance Group made permanent works for the dance history of America. They reflected the spirit of the period, especially with their experiments, where production was at the forefront during the performance (Levine, 2019). In the Happenings movement, which started to spread before Judson, non-dancers, non-actors had started to produce performances. Judson adopted this attitude naturally, believing it adds mobility to the environment (Brown, 1976). The structure of the group was flexible, there was no need for technical background, dancers could enter and exit the group. There were two classes per week and weekly workshops to share their finished or ongoing work process

as Rainer often shared her work processes with the group (Rainer, 2006). They also had a motto of “*do it and move on*” to summarize their experimental approach of 'nowness' in the dance. They focused on dividing a movement into fragments, focusing on pedestrian movements and improvising them in the performance. While experimenting with performance, improvisation, and ordinary life elements, the group was also sensitive to the cultural and political changes of their time (Levine, 2019). In that sense, their performance from the 1970 “*People's Flag Show*” which was based on Rainer's “*Trio A*” choreography, was a political statement (Walsh, 2015). When Rauschenberg, the visual designer of Cunningham, joined the Judson group and took some kind of authority, as Yvonne said “*the balance was tipped*” (Rainer, 2006, p.240). The group started to disperse as a natural consequence of changes. The Judson scene was fragmented fully in 1964 (Ross, 2007).

In 1962, at the Judson Memorial Church Dance Concert Rainer's work “*Ordinary Dance*” premiered which was defined as “*autobiographical spoken monologue*” (Crimp, 2006, p.52). In the choreography, there was the fragmentation of movements, observed behaviors from life, and for the first time Rainer's voice. Rainer's aim was to create an “*alienation*” between the audience and the performer (Ross, 2007). Jill Johnson's article about the work; “*It is an ordinary dance because it is autobiographical and Miss Rainer does a lot of talking while she moves, ordinary-type talking, telling you are the facts ... Poetry of facts. The title has its ironic aspect. The dance is out of the ordinary*” (Banes, 1993, p.67). In addition to this, the question that Yvonne asked with her attitude towards the mainstream dance movements, constituted the main problem of the work: “*what does it mean to choreograph dance when so many of the traditions no longer apply?*” (Willis, 2015). After this work, Rainer was accepted as ‘arrived’ instead of a ‘promising choreographer’ (Ross, 2007).

In 1963, “*her first evening-length performance*”, “*Terrain*” had a premier. In the piece that she worked the whole year to create, she focused on: fragmentation of sound and movements (like a collage), researches on repetitive elements, “*incorporation of natural movements*”, as well as she aimed to liberate the performance by allowing the dancers to improvise in certain parts of the performance (Banes, 1993, p.107). For this, she made a choreography focused on 'polyrhythmic movements' in which the rhythm changes arithmetically in the same period of time. In addition, using her voice in the piece was created a feeling of shock and excitement in the audience (Banes, 1993). As Banes said; “*Terrain was a choreographic achievement for Rainer and a revelation for her dancers and spectators about the nature of dance movement and the identity of a dance*” (1993, p.129).

Yvonne got close with Bob Morris after the 'Happenings' event that took place on Rauschenberg's rooftop in 1964 (Rainer, 2006). The period until 1966 was intense and important in terms of their both relationship and jobs. They took part in concerts and dance programs that are within the influence of pop-art and minimalist movements. In 1964, they joined the tour along with Cunningham and Cage, and after the tour, they went to Düsseldorf for the artist residency program that they were invited (Rainer, 2006). Both worked on their own works for 6 months. Yvonne worked on a 45-minute piece including a duet for Morris and herself that would later be called "*Parts of Some Sextets*". The show featured ten people and twelve mattresses. Yvonne used mattresses "*for hauling and reconfiguring the space*" and by using the mattress she meant "*sleep, sex, death, illness*" (2006, p. 262). She also avoided 'organic' flows, 'kinetic continuity' and instead of using music, she used the recording of tape that repeats every 30 seconds which was saying the same words. This production process was transformative for Yvonne. She had decided that her energy had changed, and she no longer wanted to do research about the "*imitations-from-life*" (2006, p.255). Instead, she began to divide movements into pieces and study each of their capacities:

*So I started at another place - wiggled my elbows, shifted from one foot to the other, looked at the ceiling, shifted eye-focus within a tiny radius, watched a flattened, raised hand moving and stopping, moving and stopping. Slowly the things, I made began to go together, along with sudden sharp, hard changes in dynamic. But basically, I wanted it to remain non-dynamic movement, no rhythm, no emphasis, no tension, no relaxation."* (2006, p.255)

She wrote an essay on this work which has a paragraph describing the basis of "*No Manifesto*" (Rainer, 2006, p. 263). After the "*No Manifesto*" was published, Yvonne said that she aimed to reset the perception of the art of the period for new approaches: "*clear the air at a particular cultural and historical moment*" (2006, p. 264) I think Yvonne aimed to establish a new sense of movement when she declared the 'No Manifesto' to clear the space.

When they returned from the tour, they started to live together. In the same year, they performed their own pieces in the same event; Yvonne presented her work "*Terrain*", which she called her *magnum opus*, while Morris presented the "*Waterman Switch*" (Rainer, 2006, p 264). But when "*The Life*" magazine reported about the performance night without mentioning Yvonne, she gave an ultimatum to Morris and told him to leave her field, he accepted (Walsh, 2015). Even so, they performed one last time on a Scandinavian tour before Morris left the theater world. Returning from the tour, Yvonne completed her performance titled "*Mind is a Muscle*", which will form the first part of her well-known signature work "*Trio A*". It was a minimalist choreography prepared solo

but performed by 3 people at the same time in different rhythms (2006). "*The Mind is a Muscle*" was presented to the Judson Theater for the first time in 1966 as a "*forty-minute-work-in-progress*" (2006, p.273). The aim of Rainer in this work was to understand how motion is produced functionally by focusing on the pre-performance process (Ross, 2007). Later in 1968, "*The Mind is a Muscle*" premiered in a new format. A dance student congratulated Yvonne with a letter containing definitions such as "*most extreme realism in dance*", "*rhapsodic celebration of bodies*", "*this is what the body is about*", "*total devotion to truth in the body*" (2006, p.30) which was summarizing the essence of her choreography.

"*Trio A*" was Yvonne's only dance that was filmed (Rainer, 2006). *Trio A*, documented by Sally Banes; three performers did the choreography at the same time, but in their own rhythm, in a rhythm called "*metronome-like regularity*", without music and repeating it when it was finished (Crimp, 2006, p.52). *Trio A* has been prepared in a structure that differs from Rainer's other performances, does not include the chance method, and even if it reflects daily life, it reduces the flow of daily life to a singular movement (Platt, 2014). Yvonne prepared the choreography in which the movements seem simple or even banal, proceed in flux without being sequential with each other. The piece designed especially silently and excludes her relationship with the audience; "*a quality that results from the continuous motion of singular movements*" (Platt, 2014, p.56). As she said; "*I eventually tackled the issue of facial presentation in Trio A of 1966, by choreographing special moves for the head that kept the performer's face constantly averted from the spectator's gaze. As a consequence, the face remained unreadable with regard to expression, personality, or quality of engagement*" (Rainer, 2006, p. 242). She wanted to cut her contact with the audience as she dances. She aimed to prevent the concepts of "*narcissism, voyeurism and exhibitionism*", which can be formed by self-displaying the dancer herself (Platt, 2014, p.42). She also says that she used this approach in her movie "*The Man Who Envied Woman*" in 1985, by not showing the female protagonist physically, in order to save the woman from a man's sexualized gaze (Rainer, 1999, 242). Rainer aimed to contrast with the "*artistic conventions*" accepted in dance with *Trio A*. Thus, *Trio A* was also a turning point in the dance world because it was the embodiment of a minimalist perspective in dance (Willis, 2015).

In 1966, Yvonne was invited to perform her works, at "*Nine Evenings: Festival of Theater and Engineering*" along with; Cage, Rauschenberg, Paxton... She prepared for the event by working very hard and the technical problems she experienced exhausted her. Even though, "*the idea of effort and finding precise ways in which effort can be made evident or not*" is the main theme of her piece, her approach to control everything, ended with "*fiasco*" in her own words (Rainer, 2006, p.275). The same night, she was hospitalized with an intestine problem that will be occurred

intermittently for almost two years. She mentioned this period in her latest film "*Privilege*" (2006, p.278). Another subject that she displayed in the same movie was the 3 days he spent in a mental hospital. After they got separated from Morris, she got undressed on the street and was found sitting on a bench (2006). By the end of the summer of 1969, they were completely separated. During this period, Yvonne took over the "*Approached to Performance*" course at the School of Visual Arts and experimented with her teaching by approaching teaching as if it were a performance. In particular, she taught "*possible form of performance*" under the name of "*Performance Demonstrations*", "*Performance Fractions*" or "*Composite*" based on the fragmentation of sound and movements (2006, p.313). In 1969, she made the first mixed media work, "*Rose Fractions*" in which there were two separate screens that show different short films along with the performance. On one of the screens, Yvonne showed her first short film, "*Hand Movie*". Her aim was to expose the audience to these "*contrasting functions and representations*", and for this purpose, she focused on themes from everyday life to "*secretion, movement, nudity, and play*" (2006, p.316). She also taught the choreography of *Trio A* to different student groups. She was working on a "*new mode of performance*" and searching for ways to "*producing spontaneous behavior within a formal setting*" (2006, p.318). Relatively, she evolved her researches under the project called, "*Continuous Project - Altered Daily*" and gathered with like-minded performers.

I think it is possible to say that the underlying ideas of the "*Continuous Project - Altered Daily*" were accumulated result of Yvonne's understanding of performance, built up until here, and was shaped by the performance art of the period. For instance, as she experimented before in her "*Ordinary Dance*" piece, she allowed performers to make choices that would change the flow of the work in a broader sense. As she researching on "*phenomenon of spontaneous behavior*", the choreographic structure that she built was allowing performers to make instant choices (Rainer, 2006, p.319). After their first performance, Yvonne realized that freedom of improvisation was also meant the change of the balance of hierarchy within the group in which Yvonne's unifying authority was slowly dissolving. She said that: "...no turning back to the old hierarchy of director and directed. A moral imperative to form a more democratic social structure loomed as a logical consequence. What happened was both fascinating and painful" (2006, p.322). In a letter she wrote to the group; "*We are totally and undeniably there... I am ready to accept total freedom of response. At this moment I have trepidations about allowing people to "alter" my material and introduce their own.... I give permission to you all to do either of these at your own risk*" (2006, p.326).

The group, which took the name of the *Grand Union* in 1970, was originally called "*Yvonne Rainer and Group*". They presented performances with an approach that changes and unites the meaning

of performance and rehearsal. That's why Yvonne was no longer in the position of teaching this group (Rainer, 2006, p.318). With the spectrum of possibilities enabled during the performance, performers were doing whatever they wanted. At one point, Yvonne felt, everything was going out of her focus. The fact that everyone started having fun by doing what they want, limited Yvonne's research possibilities as she defined "*the work was losing its unity*" (2006, p.330). I contend that Yvonne's sense of authority revealed her search for freedom in dance in this period. That might lead her to explore her own directorship in the medium of film. From another perspective, this was the period, in which Yvonne using her voice more actively and efficiently during the performance. She stated:

*Imagine that my presence is immediately thrust into a new performance "warp" (in the minds of the spectators). From that moment on people are forced to deal with me as a certain kind of performer, someone who is simultaneously real and fictitious, rather than taking me for granted as a conveyor of information (simply because I'm talking halfway rationally) ...tension that is produced from not knowing whether someone is reciting or saying something, pushes a performance back and forth, "in and out of warp" (2006, p.331).*

In her following performances, Yvonne directly interacted with the audience by asking questions that make them a participant, as it was common in performance art. The use of her voice and the motives behind it also emphasize Yvonne's approach to using her own voice in her films. Therefore, it can be said that she also used her voice as an element for performance in her films.

In 1971, after her work "*WAR*", Yvonne went on a trip to India. After this journey, she presented her latest work with the *Grand Union*, "*Numerous Frames*", which includes "*gods*", "*mortals*" and "*heroes*" (Rainer, 2006, p.338). While the two-year *Grand Union* process was ending for Yvonne, she started to move away from the idea of reforming the performance, which came with the thinning of the link between performance and rehearsal. As well as, she began to find performing unbearable and she was about to complete her first feature film, "*Lives of Performers*". Hence, even if the *Grand Union* lasted until 1976, Yvonne, as a minimalist would do, started "*doing only one thing at a time*" and left the world of performance without knowing that she will be back to dance in her late-life (2006).

### 1.3. Avant-Garde Movement of 1970s

*“The avant-garde of the first half of the twentieth century was a revolt against the institutions and their theoretical foundations”* (Sztabiński, 2017, p.70), the second half started to gain a revolutionary character with the emergence of International Situationist, Happenings, Fluxus, the Living Theater and Performance art. In this respect, the view that politics and art are intertwined has been legitimized (Yılmaz, 2011). It is in this context and the context of the rise of the Second Wave Feminist movement that the political character of Yvonne Rainer’s filmmaking must be understood.

The political, scientific, artistic, and cultural changes had caused destruction in human consciousness in this period. Thus emphasizing and transforming this destruction has become the artist's goal. Furthermore, with the transformation of art into a total multi-disciplinary form, the criterion of what is good and what is bad, what is an art and what is not, had disappeared. Because of this disappearance, new forms must have emerged (Toprak, 2017). According to Walter Ruttmann:

*In the information age; The rapid change and development of information and knowledge also creates a new artist figure. The artist in this change; can produce works with one or more disciplines such as painting, sculpture, music, film, video, installation, literature, theater, dance. Among these disciplines, the artist tries new ways of expressing, exhibiting, and models by going back and forth according to his ideas* (Hattifeld, 2006, as cited from Yılmaz, 2011).

Since the start of the Avant-garde, the form, and structure of the art, and the audience had already been questioned. Hence, artists re-positioned themselves many times and I believe artists wanted a repositioning of an audience as well. In this period, it is aimed to turn the audience into a participant and let them question the distinctions between art and life. This was the fundamental idea of a new art form. When Brecht broke the fourth wall to alienate the audience and Artaud focused on the body of the audience to involve them in play, they aimed to break the illusion established with the stage by shaking the view of the traditional theater (Toprak, 2017). Their ideas flourished in the late Avant-garde era. *“People watching a movie or a play know that the social and personal worlds enacted are not those of the actors but those of the characters. Or do they? This distinction was first challenged by the avant-garde”* (Schechner, 2002).

*“The Living Theater”*, founded in 1951 and located in the same building of Cunningham's studio, was the realization of a theater understanding that has adopted from Artaud's thoughts. According to Artaud's concept of *"The Theatre of Cruelty"*, theatre must break *"subjugation to the text and*



*rediscover the idea of a kind of unique language somewhere in between gesture and thought"* (Artaud, 1970, p.68), and the audience, as well as the actor, should find themselves in the vital situation. In this way, doubleness between life and theatre will be apparent as twins. Therefore, theater should be genuine by focusing on the 'performative body' of the audience brought an innovative approach to traditional theater. These ideas were able to be embodied during *The Living Theatre* performances (Toprak, 2017). Artaud's thoughts on space were also about breaking the conventionality. As Peter Brook, who has examined Artaud in detail summarized his thought by saying; *"I can take any empty space and say that there is a stage"* (translated from, Candan, 1994, p.122). The idea that art overflows from museums and galleries and penetrates the human mind directly, thus every person can be an artist is located here is flourished by Fluxus, which became an active group around the same time as The Living Theatre (Toprak, 2017). Finally, the Aristotelean concept of catharsis has changed according to Artaud's thoughts. Instead of having a catharsis moment at the end of the play, the whole play had catharsis moments that equated to making life and the piece identical in the moment (Candan, 1994). All these revolutionary changes can be seen in the performances of The Living Theatre in which Rainer felt she truly became a performer. They performed without written text, décor, and costumes; the actors were creating a ceremonial and instantaneous play in their daily clothes, sometimes naked; and their main goal was to constantly focus on the idea of involving the audience in the play (Candan, 1994).

Performance art, which was a new art form, had basically been divided into two main movements and the view of performance that developed before its formalization as a discipline; repeatable and unrepeatable performance, and these approaches began performing under the names *Happening* and *Fluxus*. *Fluxus* literally means continuous flow and movement, is emerged in 1960 by George Maciunas. He had an aim to create an environment for artists like Cage (Toprak, 2017). Just like Cage and Cunningham emphasized in their art, the *Fluxus* movement reacted to the commodification of art and its separation from life. As Kuspit said (2006) *"In the Fluxus art that tries to keep the Dada spirit alive, it has been stated that everyone can be an artist"* (Toprak, 2017). Moreover, after Artaud's concept of 'empty space' that 'any place can be a stage' became widespread in *The Living Theater*, it enabled *Fluxus* artists to focus on the idea that the work of art directly affecting the mind. It revealed that the *Fluxus* represents an intellectual process rather than an art movement. Also as Maciunas states *"Whatever Dada was after World War I, we can say that Fluxus is same after World War II"* (Şahiner, 2008, as cited from Toprak, 2017) as the main idea of life against materialization and towards simplification.

'*Happenings*' is another performance art movement that emerged simultaneously with Fluxus, against the limitations created by the social and political conditions of the period. The 'Happenings'

put forward by Allan Kaprow in 1959 gathers art disciplines; visual arts, dance, theater, or music under a common roof (Schechner, 2002). Kaprow was particularly influenced by the work of Artaud, Cage, and Duchamp, after watching Cage's experimental music lessons in 1957; he first put forward 18 happenings consisting of 6 episodes at the Reuben Gallery in New York. With this performance *Happenings* became official, simultaneously Kaprow stated that the performance is a kind of collage and has no specific meaning (Toprak, 2017). The most important feature that distinguishes *Happenings* from *Fluxus* is that it is 'once behaved'. From this point of view, Kaprow directly compares each performance to "*everyday life occurrences*". The 'oneness' can be organized and performed infinitely in terms of function, content, and reaction. In this context, while the result is always original, the structures that are divided into parts are examined one by one. He called these structures "*restored behaviors*" which is "*lifelike art*" rather than "*art like art*" (Schechner, 2002, p.29). As Schechner refers to; it was an act of confirmation of the 'processes of ordinary life'. The annihilation of borders between life and art was analogous to blurring the boundaries between the audience and the artist; art, and life; space, and artwork. The audience was defined as active participants in the performance, just like *Fluxus* (Toprak, 2017). Thus, by removing the dichotomy between art and the audience, the foundation of the idea of "*the personal is the political*" was established (Schechner, 2002, p.165). Formations paved the way for the birth of performance art and feminist art later on (Toprak, 2017).

While the concept of "*performance art*" was fully defined in 1970, we can observe that the Avant-garde movements that have been going on since the beginning of the 20th century are the basis of this discipline (Toprak, 2017). As a counter-movement to traditional performing arts, performance art initiated its journey with a focus on the body and considered body as an art. The focus on the body as an artwork positioned performance art under the context of plastic arts. However, because of its rebel nature, it was happening outside of the galleries and stages. Even if performance and its studies have defined, today, it is difficult to formalize the study field of the performance art (Fırıncıoğlu, 2020). Schechner defines the performance and types as;

*"In the arts, 'to perform' is to put on a show, a play, a dance, a concert. In everyday life, 'to perform' is to show off, to go to extremes, to underline an action for those who are watching...It can also be understood in relation to: Being, doing, showing doing, explaining showing doing... 'Being' is existence itself, ultimate reality. 'Doing' is the activity of all that exists. 'Showing doing' is performing: pointing to, underlining, and displaying doing. It is always changing reality, flux 'Explaining showing doing' is performance studies."* (2002, p.28)

Traditional forms of representations are broken by this foundation formed by discourses and actions in many art disciplines have covered a wider area in both artistic and academic fields with the definition of performance art. *“It focuses on the pervasiveness of performance as a central element of social and cultural life, including not only theater and dance but also such forms as sacred rituals and practices of everyday life, storytelling and public speaking, avant-garde performance art, popular entertainments, micro-constructions of ethnicity, race, class, sex, and gender”* (McKenzie, 2005, p.1). Daily activities that can be classified as 'living the life', Kaprow calls *“restored behavior”* as rituals, habits, routines from daily life that are indispensable for the performance as well as are symbolic and reflexive (Schechner, 2002). Schechner defines the reflexive as *“referring back to oneself or itself”* as I mentioned before (2002, p.28). I contend that performance art is about a constant reference to oneself, in order to catch and share a glimpse of one's existence as Rainer did perpetually.

The political aspects of performance art have many layers and feminist art is one of them. When the second wave of feminism started to rise in the 1970s, Happenings were already embracing their motto *the personal is political*. As performance art emphasized and questioned the body in a variety of ways, feminist art had the same purpose by keeping the female body at the focus of artwork instead of de-gendering their works. Moreover, feminist art examined the social position of the body and its destructions, especially war, industrialization, identity, and gender discrimination. These subjects, which were focused on by many female artists that emerged during the Avant-garde period, were integrated under the name of feminist art (Toprak, 2017). Reactions against marginalization in the 1960s attributed a mission to feminist artists, with Linda Nochlin's article *“Why There Is No Female Artist”* published in 1971 and *“Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”* was published by Laura Mulvey in 1973 and the academic infrastructure of feminist art and second-wave feminism began to strengthen. The interdisciplinary approach of the period that adopted by feminist artists continued and continued to be intertwined with performance art (Toprak, 2017).

The essence of performance, 'the being in the moment' notion, started to be questioned when it comes to digital arts. Could areas such as movies and videos that could be called replicas or clones and repeated in the same way over and over again be included in the study area of performance? As Schechner articulated this question, also answered by; *“interactivity is always in flux”* (Schechner, 2002, p.30). The participant is changing every time because the interaction is in flux. In addition, since the production process of digital media can also be performative, *“both production and reception vary from instance to instance”* (2002, p.30). I contend that digital arts could be included in the analysis of performance thus it can be said that these mediums have performance qualities. In this context, Avant-garde cinema started to become widespread in the 1970s within the framework

of its medium along with performance works. Cinema represented integrity that operated in relation to many art disciplines (painting, literature, music, theater, etc.) that existed before it (Toprak, 2017). On the basis of being interdisciplinary, cinema has constantly changed with political, social, economic, and technological innovations. Therefore, the Avant-garde cinema was suitable for reflecting the spirit of the time as an art discipline, by questioning, and experimentation, in terms of considering that cinema can integrate hundreds of years of experience in all arts including performance (Toprak, 2017).

In the 1940s, 16mm was considered as the ‘personal cinema’ that it has been described as the ‘source of meaning’. The main theme of the time was the rise of individualistic features. As Bazin refers to the 1943 cinema as, “*a cinema of authorship*”, the output of the directors and how they reflect their styles and characteristics was a prior achievement. Like what Antonioni or Buñuel did; with their “*personal visions*”; they “*created their own worlds*” (Bordwell, 1989, p.45). With this substrate of individualism, experimental cinema became reputed within the range of Avant-garde starting from the 1950s (1989). When it can be looked at the 1960's filmmakers, we will see that they are both called avant-garde and experimental (Barnett, 2008). Experimental refers to focusing on something personal as well as considering film as an autonomous medium that emphasizes individuality. The idiosyncratic nature of experimental film or performance invites spectators to shift their perspective while enables them to receive the work reflexively (1989).

The fragmentation of the moments and uniting the moments with collage symbolizes the birth of Avant-garde cinema as can be observed in Cubism (Yılmaz, 2011). Avant-garde artists, who experimented with cameras, projectors, and pellicles, focused on the presentation of the films. Thus they even divided the screen and used multiple screens at screenings (Toprak, 2017). Avant-garde cinema progressed in contrast to mainstream cinema, especially against the dominance of Hollywood cinema as well as it dealt with untested subjects, shooting, and editing techniques, displaying a radical attitude, and emergence with its own unique audience. Walter Ruttmann is regarded as one of the pioneers of Avant-garde cinema with his first short films shot in the 1920s, “*Opus I*” and “*Opus II*” (Yılmaz, 2011). George Brecht's seven-minute film named “*Entrance to Exit*”, on the other hand, has made from the basic elements of a film and used the film itself as the main theme of the film. This was an important avant-garde film (Toprak, 2017). Simultaneously, when the experimental film is encompassed by fine arts, Andy Warhol's entered into the film world in 1963. He focused on the presentation of 'cinema as a medium', an indication of the search of where cinema is rooted and a “*display cinema's essential ability to record time*”. His ‘*static*’ films were “*denouncing narrative cinema*” as he recorded 8 hour-long Empire State Building, in his first film “*Empire*” (1964). Warhol was inspired by John Cage's chance method and embraced a

minimalist approach. He concentrated on 'contentless' contents by emptying human presence (Bordwell, 1989, p.57). In another film, Warhol showed how the camera and performance were handled. In this way, the audience may become aware that they are watching a movie. Relatively, the reflexivity of the audience was evoked (1989). On the other hand, Maya Deren, who was the emerging and initiating force behind the New York Avant-garde movement and experimental film, focused on the *deconstructive montage*. She preferred “*fragmenting rather than flow*”. Her focus on editing was reflecting her political view in which she perceived editing as a powerful expression (Petrolla, Wexman, 2005). Deren was an important figure that affected Yvonne's sense of editing.

In a 1969 essay, Michelson states; "*What of the avant-garde? , Needless to say, many avant-garde films include personified agents, and, as we have seen, that schema helps the critic pick out cues in the represented world and in non-diegetic representation that can carry abstract meaning*" (Bordwell, 1989, p.179). It can be observed in the world that Rainer created in her films that will be elaborated in the fourth chapter.

## **2. WOMEN ON SCREEN: THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN YVONNE RAINER'S FILMS**

As I mentioned above, Yvonne Rainer is a performer and director who produces experimental films and performances which enabled her to perform both in front and behind the camera. Her approach to body representations and especially women's representations reflected in her films through the lens of a female performer. Relatedly, in this chapter, I will give details about the women's representations that took shape in her works of performance and film while giving insights about her female director's gaze. I discuss in this section Rainer's representation of female performers and how her representation of the female body differs significantly from that of the classical narrative of Hollywood cinema, subverting the male gaze and voyeuristic pleasure that has been criticized by the feminist film theory in the 1970s. I first elaborate on how the classical narrative of Hollywood cinema objectifies women on screen through the mechanisms of the male gaze, scopophilia, and voyeurism. In doing so, I draw on the scholarly works of feminist film theory and discuss Rainer's filmmaking in the experimental genre. I also discuss how her gaze as a female filmmaker adds a layer of complexity to her representation of women on screen.

### **2.1. The Question of Representation**

As many art theoreticians, as well as film theorists, mentioned that the subject of the '*male gaze*' was the issue not only in films but also in the Renaissance oil paintings. After the Middle Ages, with the rise of oil painting until the 1900s, the representation of wealth and possessions became the main subject of oil paintings. It was representing the value of the owner of the painting. The concept of "*you are what you have*" became widespread (translated from, Berger, 1972, p.139). In this context, women were considered as a commodity in the patriarchal system and represented for the male, by the male gaze, starting from the Renaissance oil paintings. However, the experimental film opened a space for conventional representations of women to be subverted, and along with feminist studies, the way of seeing towards women's representations is started to change.

John Berger mentions that what we see is the result of our thoughts. Our way of seeing is dependent on our thought process and it is affected by the way we look. In that sense, looking is a decision, and seeing is a result. Every image we look at is encompassed by a way of seeing. Image is a creation or representation of something that already exists. Thus, it reflects the perspective of the creator of that image (Berger, 1972). That is why people who ordered oil paintings during the Renaissance were displaying their position and situation by sharing their wealth and beauty in a

painting. This enabled them to advertise themselves in today's jargon. In this respect, as Berger elaborated, today's advertisers grasp the core of the Renaissance's way of seeing an image. They reflect the concept of wealth, superiority, and beauty in advertisements to sell a concept of future-self to the consumers. An image creates an illusion of possession of a quality or an object in this consumerist society (1972). Thus, the perception of women as a commodity empowered in the process. It can be progressively seen that, in a patriarchal society, the representation of women corresponds to a certain image as can be observed in the classical narrative of conventional Hollywood films.

“*Man acts, the woman appears*” is the summarization of perception of women's position in an image (Berger, 1972, p.47). As women born into a society that is dominated by the patriarchy, the social identity of a woman is predetermined, restricted, and oppressed. Berger points out that, a woman who struggles to survive in this form of structure has to turn her gaze towards herself all the time at the expense of her unity. The division of acting and appearing becomes an automated mechanism in women, unlike men. She learns to behave in a certain way through observing and internalizing the women's representations that are created by men. In this way, the woman becomes an object of the gaze, more specifically the male gaze. Male gaze and women's objectified appearance can be clearly seen in the naked/nu context of a Renaissance oil painting. Berger explained, the concept of nakedness born in the mind of a viewer because the gestures of a woman in the painting imply that as if she is in shame for her nakedness. In other words, as soon as she was aware that she is not alone and knows that she is being watched, her shyness reflects that nakedness is something to be ashamed of (1972). However, her expression is not a reflection of her feelings, she has a passive position. This pacified nakedness called nude in traditional European art. As Berger connotated Clark, nude is a sort of cloth; it is a way of seeing which causes a sexualized and eroticized representation. On the other hand, naked is being one's self, a state of openness. A nude person is not a reflection of one's self but an objectified image (1972). In this respect, the representation of women, for a long period and even as continuing tradition, is detached from her own self, put into a mold that was shaped by the male gaze, and repeated throughout the time within a variety of mediums in which film is one of them. Until an experimental film genre opened a space for research of women's representations, especially conventional Hollywood narrative cinema continued to do so.

The issue of women's representation in classical Hollywood narrative cinema was stressed and problematized efficiently by Laura Mulvey for the first time. In the 1970s, while the effects of the Women's Liberation Movement were widespread, Mulvey's seminal essay “*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*” (1975) played an establishing role both for feminist and film theory studies

(Sondervan, 2015). She remarked that cinema focuses on the “*ways of seeing and pleasure in looking*” (Mulvey, 1975, p.15), thus especially manipulating visual pleasure is an important aspect. She remarked a rethinking on cinema by indicating the pre-existed patterns and socially formed structures of sexual differences through the representations of women and viewing of the spectator. Relatedly, she opened up a debate on the male gaze. What Mulvey specifically pointed out on viewing habits and ideologies that center the ‘male gaze’ is, male gaze formed a basis for women's representations and identifications. Therefore women's image is manipulated according to the male gaze. As she questioned this kind of gendered viewing of gaze and gendered spectatorship, she stated that Hollywood cinema “*was the ‘case in point’*” for her essay. Because Hollywood cinema uses the mechanisms of voyeurism and fetishism which centered around the male gaze (Sondervan, 2015). Voyeurism and fetishism are the “*primary channels of spectatorial identification invited by classic Hollywood cinema*” (Hole, Jelača, Kaplan, Petro, 2017, p.3). Identification for women and women's representation is created through a visual or more specifically with erotic language. The erotic language is comprised by the male gaze in Hollywood cinema through the codes on beauty and eroticism, hence women become the object of desire (1975). Mulvey aimed to reveal, decode and analyze the codes of objectification, so she can dispose of it; “*analyzing pleasure, or beauty, destroys it*” (1975, p.16).

As Kaplan summarises the gaze according to Mulvey: “*scopophilia or sexual pleasure in looking, is activated by the very situation of cinema*” that takes place in three ways; “*within the film text itself, men gaze at women, who become objects of the gaze; the spectator, in turn, is made to identify with this male gaze and to objectify the women on the screen; and the camera’s original “gaze” comes into play in the very act of filming*” (Kaplan, 1983, p.15). As cinema provides a variety of pleasures one of them is “*pleasure in looking*” (scopophilia) in which has an erotic basis of looking that positions “*another person as object*” as Freud puts in the context. This can also enable voyeuristic gaze, obsession, and perversion because, at the core, sexual satisfaction comes from watching “*an objectified other*” (Mulvey, 1975, p.17). Moreover, the cinema audience watches the film in a dark room. A dark room creates isolation from one another and positions the audience as a voyeur. A sense of witnessing to private life is generated by the act of watching in darkness. The audience forgets the outer world as well as her/his ego. With this temporary loss of ego, the audience identifies with the performer and projects his desires to the performer. In other words, the audience builds a narcissistic relationship and feels pleasure with identification with the performer. Relatedly, pleasure in this context defined by male pleasure. There is no content for female pleasure because her sexuality is connected to the male castration complex which is the issue that Mulvey also remarked on in her essay. Her emphasis on psychoanalytic theory was effective because it pointed



out the source of the problem of the male gaze that is rooted in Freud's "*Oedipus Complex*" and helped women to identify the source of the problem of the patriarchal order. Related to the Oedipus Complex, the woman is represented as a castrated male and needs to act in a certain way within pre-determined roles, so that she can fulfill her purpose of being a woman, and can be pardoned for her lack of phallus. This creates a male castration complex and castration anxiety which is projected onto the female imagery and reoccured in new media and film as a representation of women. Thus, women's representations presented to protect the power mechanism of the male order so that men would not be threatened by castration. The "*woman then stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other*" (Mulvey, 1975). As Rainer had a clarified stance in this respect, one of her characters deliberately announces that "[M]y cunt is not a castrated cock" (Petrolla, Wexman, 2005), in "*Journeys From Berlin*" (1979).

Thus it can be summed up to that, pleasure by looking and identification create an illusion of reality. "*Sexual instincts and identification processes have a meaning within the symbolic order which articulates desire*" (1975, p.18). Desire, brings the subconscious mind back to the castration complex and projects onto woman representations, because of "*her lack of a penis, implying a threat of castration and hence unpleasure*" (1975, p. 21). In order to satisfy and cover this male fear, the representation of women becomes "*the object of the male gaze*", "*through the mechanisms of voyeurism and fetishism*" (Kaplan, 2001, p.29 ). In order to feel satisfaction, the voyeuristic male gaze needs a woman image for his own sake. Therefore, the male gaze shapes the representation of the female body, represses women's discourse, ignoring the women's gaze and women's desire while objectifying her (Kaplan, 2001).

As many feminist critics pointed out that narrative structure was the underlying force of the objectification of women in Hollywood cinema (Chapman, 1996). The narration has always dependent on causality and creates continuity, hence the sense of realness is created (1996). In the classical narrative of Hollywood cinema, cause and effect are the primary extensions of characters who are formulated from the traits of nineteenth-century novels. This importance of character is connected with the rise of Hollywood cinema. After WWII, the U.S. initiated itself "*as a world power*" and needed "*reaffirmation of that new identity*" (Chapman, 1996, p. 44). While rewriting their history, the choices "*what is important and what is not*" was determined (1996, p. 44). Thus women were considered as not important and their stories were excluded from history in order to maintain hegemony. Following this, the binary opposition of gender used at the basis of the construction of representations on both males and females. Therefore, men associated with active and females with passive traits so that active force can rewrite history. In order to do so, male characters are created from myths, and female characters used as an extension of their purpose

(1996). These representations continuously reoccurred in films, to name a few; Alfred Hitchcock, Orson Welles, Michael Curtiz, Francis Ford Coppola, William A. Wellman, John. M. Stahl and some others, portrayed women within the traditional oppressive structures and sexualizing gender.

Tanya Modleski who encompass the repression of both female and male, made extensive research and analysis on Hitchcock's films and specifically on the representations of women. I mention Hithcock films here because they are emblematic cases to discuss the objectification of women on screen. What I mentioned above can be seen in her analysis of "*Rebecca*" (1940). As I pointed out, castration anxiety provokes in the male and projected on the woman as a castrated woman. This projection haunts the male subject as Mulvey stresses two options in a castration scenario, whether a man gains control over a woman with his power; or else a woman gets punishment and devalued so that man can gain power (1975). In the film *Rebecca*, the heroine first represented as someone who does not take men seriously, and a childlike figure. She does not have a name throughout the film and marries an older man whose wife had died recently. From the start, the heroine perceives that the dead wife, Rebecca, was kind, beautiful, and had lots of good qualities, so she tries to be like Rebecca. In the process, she tries to behave according to what her husband (father-like figure) would like or the old maid (mother-like figure) would approve. Modleski refers this to the Electra Complex in which a woman marries to father and eliminates the effects of the mother (2016). In the end, it turns out that, Rebecca was not good, even had terrible qualities, and was negated deliberately by her husband. The old housemaid who was on Rebecca's side was also portrayed as bad and eliminated from the story. Therefore, the heroine was molded into an appropriate woman by learning what is to be a good woman and what is not in order to submit to her husband. As a final result, the man gained power over his ex-wife by pointing out that she was guilty thus needed a punishment, even though he killed Rebecca His sin was pardoned because the dead woman was the scapegoat. Thus, as it can be seen in the example of *Rebecca*, the representation woman was not only objectified but also devalued and reshaped in a variety of ways to satisfy men's ego while her personality was completely neglected. Also, not only one woman representation is given but at least three of them manipulated for this purpose. In this respect, as Lauretis emphasized that, women should have a desire beyond being an object of desire, albeit not only destroy the stereotypes of women's representation but establishing a new one (Ince, 2017).

## **2.2. Yvonne Rainer and Experimental Film**

As I mentioned in the first chapter, experimental cinema aroused along within the avant-garde movement. Even though, throughout the time canonization was implemented on experimental film,

in the core 'experimental' is "*challenge to conventional forms of representation and the search for new languages and forms appropriate to a more pluralist social formation*" (Russell, 1999). It was founded as an alternative '*narrative realism*' to the conventional cinema (1999). There are few anchor points to consider a film experimental. A director wants to create a self-reflexive work and criticize "*superior role of directors*" (monoskop); a wish to express personal viewpoints in an unusual way; to transmit a mood; to explore the variable possibilities of the film medium; to improvise, express and experiment outside the mainstream cinema (Bordwell, Thompson, 2006). Besides these, the common purpose of challenging the spectator's active or passive stance can be observed in experimental films.

Experimentations with the relationship between audience and performer had started in the theatre before cinema with leading names; Meyerhold, Jarry, Brecht, and Artaud. The aim of building an active stance of an audience was created. After Brecht 'breaks the fourth wall', the audience was invited or even forced to witness the double-sidedness of the play by acknowledging that, it is an act that has a construction (Candan, 1994). "*Brechtian stance of the active viewer*" becomes a focus in experimental films as well (Marks, 1999, p.183). It generally correlates with the notion that is transferred to the spectator's body from the screen. With the rise of physical theatre, exploration in the area of audience engagement and involvement became an inseparable notion of the play. Rather than creating an illusion or replication of life, "*the alive-ness of the theatre event and body-consciousness of the performer*" is prioritized (Callery, 2001, p.11). They can actively participate with their comprehension instead of losing themselves into an illusion. Similarly, experimental films frequently underlined the same notion.

Congruently, I contend that experimental film holds a similar stance towards the relationship with the audience like physical theatre. Even though 'aliveness' does not correspond to the nature of the film (Callery, 2001), active participation of the audience is possible in a film. The experimental film can activate the audience's perception so that they don't have to be in a fixated, voyeuristic position to watch the film so that they can become active participator. In this way, the audience can become aware of their own body instead of embodying the character's body on the screen, and yet still be able to grasp the meaning and emotions that the director wants to transmit. "*Voyeurism relies on maintaining the distance between the viewer and viewed*" (Marks, 1999, p.184). Thus it can be said that the experimental film reduces the distance between the audience and both with the characters on the screen and the director. Moreover "*identification closely linked to the impression of reality*" (Metz, 1990, p.9). Experimentalists, awake the spectator to their act of watching, shift their perception, and even aim to create non-identification (Rees, 1999). In this respect, as Rainer implemented in her films, she distanced the spectator from the narrative structure and the character

identification while transmitting emotions in the story. In this way, she let the audience to psychologically understand the character while not identifying with the character. This approach both cut the illusion of film and ensured the impression of reality while shortening the distance between the audience and the character (Metz, 1990). Also she used stereotypical character representations of classical Hollywood in order to challenge the conventional representations of the female body.

Furthermore, experimental films provide a space for directors to appear both in front of and off the camera. In this way, the audience can identify with the director and experience first-person enunciation (Rascaroli, 2017). As Rascaroli puts it; *“each spectator, as an individual and not a member of an anonymous, collective audience, is called upon to engage in a dialogic relationship with the enunciator, to become active, intellectually and emotionally, and interact with the text”* (2009, p.36 as cited from, Corrigan, 2011, p.57). In the experimental film, the director herself can put apparent elements from her personal life or can appear physically in front of the camera. With the autobiographical nature of this genre, the distance between the director and the audience may be reduced. This can also be observed in Rainer's films, from the start of her film career, she appears in front of the camera as herself or with her voice, or just mention of her name 'Yvonne'. In this way, her ongoing presence in the film is validated. In her first feature film, *“Lives of Performers”*, she shows her name as the 'director', in the screenwriting scene. After her first four films, she started to personalize her narratives instead of using abstracted narrative structures and gave more personal details from her life. She used her life as a *“mythic source”* and embraced the feminist manifesto *“the personal is political”* (Petrolla, Wexman, 2005, p.150). Rainer's decision to produce in this genre enables her to both implement experiments with filmic devices, convey emotions, and subvert the male gaze in order to initiate new women representations. As she canalized her focus to film she felt more able to do so. *“Film seemed to Rainer to be the perfect medium to articulate the private experience of emotion”* (Glahn, 2009, p.79). Her experimental approach was enabled her to represent herself, her ideas, and her life progressively in which a closer relationship with the audience can be built.

In 1942, when Maya Deren's pioneering work *“Meshes of the Afternoon”* turned the attention towards women's experimental cinema, starting from the 1960s, 70s and 80s was already a playground for many women experimentalists (Blaetz, 2007). As Rainer does, many women directors started to share their subjective look on the female body and their female gaze within the genre of experimental film. Along with the pursuit of answering the question *“How does a woman see?”* exploration in the nexus of perception and embodiment became a focus in the feminist film theory (Marks, 1999). In this respect, within the experimental genre, representation of the body,

conditions of visibility, and spectatorship became an important aspect. Questions of ‘how do I appear, how do I see, how do I look’ directly affected the representation of women. Relatedly, Rainer’s embodied presence in her films enabled her to play with norms about women's bodies. For example, in her last film “*Murder and Murder*” she made a spectacle of herself, tells about her history of surgeries and biopsies while referring to homophobia and murder that is caused by social and political repression. Throughout the film, Rainer portrays “underrepresented bodies of contemporary cinema” and articulates this through carnivalesque bodies (Petrolle, Wexman, 2005, p.174).

In addition to this, Rainer consistently claims her right to be in front of the camera. Her presence shifts the dramatic effect of the narrative evokes that the film is a construction, builds an unusual and bond with the spectator. Her awkwardness and direct reference to spectator (by looking at the camera directly) add another layer to communication. Because she opens herself, shows her vulnerability in order to bring viewers closer to the subject matter. Her realness and real self refers that what she is telling is real, not an abstract entity. In this way, she embodies the melodrama, connects it to everyday life and expands it beyond the conventional understanding. Thence, her way of looking towards the female body is presented in a unique way and let her express her female gaze (Petrolle, Wexman, 2005).

### **2.3. Representation of Performing Female Bodies**

Rainer’s representation of women on the stage and the ways in which she subverts the male gaze resonates with the critiques of feminist film theory. She contributed to the artistic world by deconstructing the conventional hierarchical and gendered ways of looking and developing a historical point of view on the moving female body. Whilst she was part of Judson Theatre, along with other female performers, she performed performances with exaggerated and unusual movements, with absurdity and humor. These are, “*critique sexualized representations of femininity*”, “*play with gender representation as a formal strategy*”, “*displace an older, unfashionably expressive representation of women*” and “*undermining of older notions of form and composition by mocking ‘traditional’ dance*” (Morse, 2018, p. 56, 62, 66). As Wolff remarks that dance should be disturbing so as to question and reveal the body's construction (Zdrojewski, 2014). Rainer's approaches reflected this and bespeak on female impersonifications. She focuses on the connection between costume and representation; identity and meaning under identity; thus deconstructs the body, which can be examined in her 1963 performance “*Words Word*” (Morse, 2018).

In this work, her iconoclastic approach combined with her counter thoughts on “*dancing body as an object of sexualizing gaze*” as well as she opened a space for the re-representation of both genders (Morse, 2018, p.59). As dance theorist Foster indicates that anatomy is not a destiny, a dancer can train her/his body regardless of gender and gendered codes, even if institutionalized patriarchal values impose reverse (Foster, 1998). Relatively, Rainer as a dancer objectifies the body of hers and her male partner (Paxton) in order to point out the explicit truth that they are the same in “*Words Word*”. Therefore, Rainer and Paxton used objectification of both genders (Morse, 2018). They criticized the concept of gender by revealing “*sameness*” and eliminating the differences in this 10-minute work. “*Rainer and Paxton looks as much alike as possible*” in the work and “*questions gender fundamentally*” (Morse, 2018, p. 58-61). Morse also highlighted that the work looks unremarkable at first glance but is actually a radical work because gender binarism was never questioned before in a dance performance. Thus it can be said that Rainer rejected what called private or personal with the negation and used “*desubjectivization*” of both sexes (Morse, 2018, p.56).

“*Words Word*” is an important work in deconstructing gender roles, like Helen Thomas said, “*minimizing expressivity and gender in order to be a neutral doer*” (2003, as cited from Morse, 2018, p.57). As Rainer and Paxton aimed to damage the structures of traditional and normative modes of dance, they focused on the neutral body. Rainer later elaborated this in her films by using presenting the women's body as a “*neutral doer*” and “*literal body*” with the intent of deconstructing the relationship between the audience and the character. In other words, she aimed to break the voyeuristic perspective (Morse, 2018). After this performance *neutral doer* became a declaration in her famous “*No Manifesto*” and became a focal point in her choreography “*Trio A*”. As Morse states “*Rainer is "overwriting female gender" effectively in an "authoritative speaking position"*” (2018, p.58).

On the other hand, Rainer and Paxton were naked but not nude thus their nakedness was not eroticized (Morse, 2018). As I mentioned before, the difference between naked and nude is directly related to the objectification of women. “*Her nakedness is not a function of her sexuality but of the sexuality of those who have access to the picture*” (Nochlin, 1988). Relatedly, the woman is naked only by the way the audience sees her (Berger, 1972). The image of the nude woman is not related to her own feelings and desires and her nudity puts her in a passive position (1972). As Baker interprets Spinoza, passion is a passive state, the reduction of the power of action (2014). Accordingly, the woman is represented as the object of passion, not the source of passion. Thus I can interpret that the sexuality of a woman is disempowered with the nude depictions. By being naked, Rainer represented herself as herself. Through the presentation of both genders, their

nakedness refers to sameness; eliminated the feeling of uniqueness and mystery, which relaxes others because it creates a feeling of finding reality (1972). Thus it can be said that the nude portrayal of the woman is a projection of the desire of man, not the truth of the female body. That is to say, Rainer and Paxton, revealed: “*the visual truth*” of their gender from the start of the performance in order to show their progress for “*unmaking of both ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’*” (Morse, 2018, p.66).

When we look at subsequent performances of Rainer and later to her films, it can be said that “*Words Word*” performance is also the basis for her research on the female body. In order not to represent women as an object of desire, Rainer's usage of the literal body with awkward movement, repudiation of eye contact, movements that can be called awkward without rhythm became a distinctive feature in her performances. In this way, she can be focused on “*movement-for-its-own-sake*” as her teacher, Cunningham did (Morse, 2018). Thus, later, minimalism enabled her to concentrate on issues between the private and public domain in her films. I believe that, as Rainer aimed to open a space for the dancer's body with the declaration of “*No Manifesto*”, she also aimed to equalize the differences between the genders before establishing new structures on the female body.

#### **2.4. Director’s Gaze: Female Gaze?**

When the subject is about the gaze, there is no possibility to talk about neutrality. The way that the gaze is deployed is the fundamental point to consider for an analysis of a film. As film cannot eliminate to gaze fully because visibility is a non-detachable part of it, the question is how the gaze is portrayed. As I mentioned that the male gaze is a sexually oriented and manipulated gaze that is projected onto a woman’s representation. However this is not only specific to women, there are also different forms of gazes that are distinguished. Gazes based on race and ethnicity suffer as much as a female does. Because binary opposition is stressed between man/woman and Black/White, gaze reflects the power relationships (Dirse, 2013). Therefore, when the director’s gaze throws off the dominance of the powerful gaze -in this case, the male gaze-, then it is possible to talk about alternatives. In this respect, when there is no objectification of a voyeuristic pleasure or objectified gaze, perhaps we can consider the alternative gaze.

In this context, as I mentioned it is crucial to comprehend that cinema is structured around the male gaze thus, the male perspective is dominant in every area; “*the masculine point of view is prevalent simply because men control the industry*” (Muir, 1989, as cited from, Dirse, 2013, p.18). The sexual

difference at the core of the concept of three looks that I mentioned above; the look of the man in the narrative, the look of the spectator, and the look of the director (camera); is needed to be subverted so that a female director can change the ways of seeing. Before implementing a woman's perspective, it is important to shift the position of the power that defines what masculine and feminine are. In other words, it is substantial to disconnect the femininity from a specific female identity in order to reproduce a female gaze (Dirse, 2013). To demonstrate, Zoe Dirse, a cinematographer mentions her documentary film and what she altered in her films: “*almost all the gazes are female: the look of the carrier, or the pro-filmic event, the look of the narrator, and often the look of the spectator*” (2013, p.21). Moreover, she mentions the outcome when the crew and camera eye are female: “*the gaze is so deliberately subverted from the male to the female, we finally have an opportunity to view ourselves as we really are, in the case of this film, not as objects of male desire but as objects of female desire*” (2013, p.21).

Such kind of subversion of the male gaze can be observed in Rainer's films, which were included in the Avant-garde movement of the 1960s (Kaplan, 2001). Besides her researches on the narrative techniques, forms of representation, and usage of cinematic apparatus, she opened a space for speculation of the audience in order to let the film construct itself in the process by eliminating the generalized representations of women (Kaplan, 2001). For instance, in her first feature-length film “*Lives of Performance*” (1972) she interweaved filmic elements such as visual elements, voice-overs, and editing techniques, in order to disrupt the audience's perception. In opposition to the repressed representations of the female characters, she liberated them by giving a voice, “*they speak their thoughts and feelings about their complex relationships, working in the analytic mode; they seek to understand both themselves and their lovers*” (Kaplan, 2001, p.124). In this way, Rainer found a new way to detach her woman characters from the limitations of the male gaze (Hole, Jelača, Kaplan, Petro, 2017).

As Rainer includes a female perspective in her films, her gaze positioned far from being erotic. As she did in her performances, she neutralized the body to prevent looked-at-ness. She also even annihilates a female representation in order to completely prevent the male gaze as she did in her film “*A Man Who Envied Woman*” (1985). Kaplan mentioned that “*destroying the narrative and the possibility for viewer identification with the characters, destroy both the male viewer's pleasure and our pleasure*” (2001, p.32). Rainer's ‘*neutral doers*’, withholds the gender oppositions by not expressing emotional intensity at all. These neutralized bodies performed by simplistic, task-like bodily movements, like raising an arm or tilting the pelvis which showed her remark that, they are actual and present at the moment (Yang, 2007). As Mulvey remarked the link between narrative and the audience is problematic; “*sadism demands a story, depends on making something happen,*



*forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all occurring in a linear time with a beginning and an end*”, Rainer aimed to destroy the tyranny of narrative (1975, as cited from, Yang, 2007, p.15). Thus, she implemented her stories that disable the coded perception of the audience by breaking their expectations. In that sense, it is clear to see that Rainer especially used the distancing tools in her films to prevent the identification of the audience with the characters at the expense of preventing any sort of pleasure. In this way, she also breaks the male gaze and indicated that the film is a construct (Kaplan, 2001). These tools are also considered as typical Brechtian “*distancing*” tools, such as “*unusual camera angles and framing, color filters, rapid repetitions or montage, retardation, and absurd mise-enscène*” (Smelik, 1998, p.125). As she implemented these tools, she also added textual elements in between scenes. In her films “*Lives of Performers*” (1972) and “*A Film About a Woman Who...*” (1974), she used texts that often appear on the screen as an annotation or additional information. These were provided with a distancing effect by opening the space between audience and character. Likewise, her usage of voice-over provided distancing because the voice and character were not identical. The female voice was explaining the inner worlds, moods, and thoughts of characters by not presenting the character as the owner of the voice (Kaplan, 1983). Her style can be considered as a “*gender-specified anti-narrative, anti-visual pleasure strategy*” (Yang, 2007, p.15). However as Yang asks the question; “*isn't there any pleasure in the film?*” (2007, p.18). It is of course not about the scopophilic viewing but about the neutralized body. As four characters in “*A Film About a Woman Who...*” keeps shifting their positions as viewers and performers, the audience has a similar positioning. The pleasure comes from the unlimited possibility of changing positions and values (2007). Hence Rainer built up a new point of view not only for women but for all viewers while implementing her unique gaze into her films.

## **2.5. Yvonne Rainer and Melodrama**

In the previous sections, I mentioned Yvonne Rainer’s filmmaking in the experimental genre. Nevertheless, Yvonne Rainer has also stated that the genre of melodrama has also been influential in her filmmaking. Melodramas, starting from the nineteenth century focused on the division of good and evil. By dividing humanity into two types, certain roles were attributed to them in which “*evil people would always conspire against the innocent*” (Zarrilli, 2006, p.236). Therefore, the distinction of hero and villain was the main arc of melodramatic stories. The viewer of the melodrama can experience the force of evil, learn the moral codes, thus be taught how to be good. As well as they can “*identify with new types of virtue and vice*” 2006, p.263). The end of a

melodrama film, mainly, banishes evil and rejoins the utopic paradigm of society. In this respect, current cultural, social, economic, class, and racial problems are the subject of melodrama while keeping the same underlying pattern of duality. Relatedly, a woman's body became a site of experimentation and manipulation in the genre of melodrama. *"The woman is being projected as the scene of the man's fears and anxieties concerning familial responsibility and sexual performance"* (Strauven, 1999, p.360). Hence deep contradictions have occurred about the roles of the woman. In the 1930s, cinematic representation of gender emphasized how to be a woman through bodily genres like melodrama, porn (Jelaca, 2017). 1930s women depiction of strong women referred to as 'bad', therefore, deserved to be punished. Moreover, while the focus on class difference has changed, women's representations had shifted. One of Hollywood's best film subjects, women's upward mobility of classes, replaced the focus on women's place in family and identity (Strauven, 2017). In this respect, melodrama as a gendered genre reflected its core aspects of the division between good and evil to the woman. In this way, women's place in society in manipulated continuously until the 1970s.

When Rainer got into filmmaking more than the performance, the initial starting point of her films was melodrama in order to both convey the situations in her life and criticize melodrama (Crimp, 2006). As she mentioned in her autobiography, she grew up with the emotional power of Hollywood melodrama as well as the influence of European art film. 1970s feminist film theory and the subject of 'male gaze' intrigued her attention (Rainer, 2006). Along with her own devastation in her love life and transition from moving body to moving image, she gained recognition on the feminist subjects. Thus she found feminist fuel to keep on with the melodrama genre. Her words express her realization on the subject; *"Thus, "falling in love" is no more than the process of alteration of male vision- idealization, mystification, glorification- that renders void the woman's class inferiority. However, the woman knows that this idealization, which she works so hard to produce, is a lie..."* (2006, p.386).

Rainer knew that melodrama is one of the main gendered genres that portray women's representations in a subverted way. In Hollywood movies, the woman is positioned as an Other (enigma, mystery) and patriarchal myths are repeated over and over again with the aim to educate and expose women to encodings about women's positioning in their personal and public life. In these films, women's issues are ignored, and women are centered only in the family context of the melodrama (Kaplan, 2001). The melodramatic form deals with *"the processes of repression and the status of repressed content"* (Kaplan, 2001, p.25). In this framing, Rainer depicted her women characters as independent individuals who speak of their feelings constantly. Not only female characters but also male ones express their feelings instead of acting out stereotypical reactions.

Furthermore, in melodrama, the audience is de-eroticized because they are considered as a woman. Thus the subtext states that women's sexual fantasies should be passive. In that sense, women whether being “*in the victim pattern the heroine takes the suffering upon herself and usually dies*” or “*in the fetishism pattern the woman is brought under control... the femme fatale must be murdered*” (2001, p.6). These codes indicate that men are afraid of female sexuality and emotions, which reveals the problem in Hollywood Cinema, and it becomes a problem of defining femininity. Thus, “*through fetishizing the female form, the man attempts to deny its difference*” (2001, p.5). However, it can be said that, as Rainer equalized the ground of her body representations both in her performances and films, she eliminated this problem in her own way. Her way of representing women's bodies is neither sexualized nor eroticized. Critiques said “*Rainer's films allow for substitution on the basis of conscious, recognized sameness*” (2001, p. 115). With substitution, distancing was provided, which opened up space for analysis and the possibility for “*placing oneself in the position of*” the other (2001, p. 115). Thus I contend that she opens a space for males to empathize and understand women's situation.

Melodrama questions the origin of emotions and generally formed by the framework of binary oppositions such as love/hate, pleasure/pain (Baker, 2014). In this context, Rainer's interest to transmit emotional struggles around love relationships took another form. It still carries the oppositions and struggles of emotional issues, but in doing so, unlike Hollywood melodramas, she prevented a classical understanding of identification, simultaneously, she continued to convey “*the poignancy of the situation itself*” (Kaplan, 2001, p.118). In this way, while preserving the importance of emotional life, she relegates private experiences by using distancing tools (2001). As Rainer stated; “*I wanted the audience to be swept away with pity, and if not terror, then a strong empathetic unease*” (2001, p.115). Specifically, Rainer researched the problems of “*closeness, intimacy, loving*” in order to reveal “*how women get positioned as victims*” (Kaplan, 2001, p.118). She wanted to avoid stereotypical narrative forms to express love relationships, but also wanted to “*retain the validity of the emotions; in fact, she frees emotions from the trappings of dominant narrative forms, representing emotions through narrative words*” (Kaplan, 2001, p.116). As well, Rainer subverted the classical association tools of melodrama that connect audience and character such as facial feedback, muscle sympathy which I will discuss in the next chapter. This aspect is also proportional to Rainer's preference for the experimental film. As Kaplan explains, with experimental cinema, there is a possibility to liberate from the illusionistic representations, oppressive and artificial expressions of Hollywood (2001). Within this scope, Rainer represented her female characters with expressionless, numb faces instead of portraying them with the turbulence of emotions. Thus, Rainer, as a woman, was able to reflect women's experiences,

emotions, ideas, and sensations in social formations as well as with the women's forms she deconstructed, she liberated women and provided them corporeality. To demonstrate, in "Lives of Performance" she both expanded her female character Valda's "spectacle" position and pointed out that, her body is speaking on the behalf of her emotions:

*The solo both highlights woman's position as "spectacle" for the male gaze (her lover is watching and evaluating the performance) and moves beyond that positioning to become an expression of Valda's precarious, vulnerable place in the love triangle. The movements are all about balance, about falling and regaining posture, about extraordinary bodily positions, all of which are analogs to Valda's emotional space (Kaplan, 2001, p.119)*

To summarize, Rainer, as a woman, a dancer, and as a director, stood against traditional understandings and classical representations of Hollywood cinema with her representations of body and women in specific. She mainly subverted the representational pattern that melodrama was repeating throughout the time. The fact that she produced her films within the scope of experimental as opposed to conventional narrative cinema is proof of this. The distance between the camera and the character in classical narrative cinema, and the audience's identification with the camera's eye, disappears in Rainer's experimental films. Thus she eliminates the stereotypical gaze towards bodies and especially the male gaze. Moreover, Rainer, who breaks the identification of the audience with the camera and the construction of the film, brings the distance between the audience and the character closer. In this respect, by including her own personal space as a director, she eliminates the distance between the audience and the director as well by actively sharing her private life, emotions, and intellectual idea (Corrigan, 2011). Her subjective experiences became a public subject so that audience can correspond actively. Thereby Rainer's production of experimental films on the melodrama genre drew her closer to feminist studies. It is possible to observe the concept of "*personal is political*" in her films, which was the motto of the second-wave feminism movements of the period.

### 3. WOMEN IN FRONT OF THE SCREEN: EMBODIED WOMEN SPECTATORSHIP

As I elaborated on the issue of gaze in the second chapter, Rainer's films subverts the gaze, more specifically the male gaze, with the aim of breaking the conventional approach to the representation of women, it is important to note that the films of Yvonne Rainer refer to audial and sensual sensations rather than gaze. In this way, Rainer enables her spectator to experience the film in an embodied manner instead of centering the gaze in her films. In this sense, the body on the screen allows the audience to experience the body on the screen in an embodied way, thus the presence of the body on the screen can add dimension to the spectatorship. This locates her films in a unique position in which the spectator's experience is created in an individualistic way that is different to classical narrative cinema. Rainer's directorial strategies also diverge from classical cinema and this allows her to create a different level of relationship with the spectator. This relationship is based on sensual, audial, and kinesthetic experiences. Additionally, the body is the center of Rainer's films which is why embodied experience is prominent in her narrative structure. She breaks the identification of the audience that is established with the gaze, whilst she creates a new one that is built through bodily connections which shortening the distance between the character and the audience. That is why in this chapter, I focus on the phenomenological relationship that is enabled through senses and kinesthetic experience. Phenomenological, in this respect, refers to direct experience at the moment. Hence, I can illustrate how Yvonne Rainer's experimental films and her directorial approach enable spectators to experience the bodies on the screen while forming a bond and a relationship with the film in a different way to a classical narrative film.

The cinematic experience creates a doubleness in the perception of the viewer in which causes an ongoing awareness during the film. As film directs us to where to look, it also emphasizes that we are not there. In this way, the cinematic experience is both direct and mediated. We are both within and without film (Sobchack, 1992, p.7). It can be said that we include ourselves in the performance of what is visible while incorporating them into our own existence. In a way, as a viewer, we sustain a transposing or everchanging position continuously, i.e. we know that our bodies are not there and yet we are able to feel what is transferred to us especially through our bodies. The film does not only have an intellectual reference but also a bodily one, which creates an embodied perception (1992). Thus the question arises, "*How cinema can represent embodied experience, and why it should do so?*" as well as "*How film represents the "unrepresentable" senses, such as touch?*" (Marks, 1999). These questions are a guide to explain how the viewer's body is instantly and creatively awakened by the filmic experience. I demonstrate how Yvonne Rainer's films reveal the 'felt' experience in the moment of watching, not only cognitively but also with an embodied perception. There is a fluid connection between mind and body, not a separation (Barker, 2009) and

Rainer's endeavor to embodying feelings takes this connection into consideration. She transmits the feelings through the mind by means of affecting the body. Through this process, I contend that she activates the spectator's cognition by awakening them to the moment, in order to give them a space to awaken instead of being hypnotized in narrative illusion. In doing so, the spectator can be actively and consciously participate in the film by choosing what to receive. Transmitting meaning through bodily sensations and embodiment enables the spectator to experience the film kinesthetically.

### **3.1. Sensory Experience of the Spectator's Body**

We live in a world that is constrained and free at the same time. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty expressed, our freedom is not detached from the culture and history into which we were born (Marks, 1999). We learn certain manners that shape our reality, but we also have the ability and freedom to realize possibilities of our becoming as well as discover other perspectives beyond our constructed worlds (Sobchack, 1992, p.7). When we watch a film, we find ourselves immersed in a world where we are whether directly with narrative or sensuously by feeling it (1992). What we are watching is an expressed perception of another (1999). In this act of watching, we watch 'other's projection of expression, at the same time we express our own perception of an experience as well (1992). "*What else is a film if not 'an expression of experience by experience'?*" (1992, p.3). Since we experience everything through our bodies with the unifying aspects of the visible, audible and kinetic senses, these also represent and reflect the perception of the filmmaker. Thus, the cinematic experience creates a system for communication that is derived from bodily perception as well as constitutes an intersubjective communication among filmmaker, spectator, and film (Elsaesser, Hagener, 2010).

Whatever we see on screen addresses us and expresses the perception of the "other". While watching an expressive projection of an "other", we also express our perception (Sobchack, 1992). Fundamentally, perception is embodied by the materiality of the lived body's presence and formed by interpretation and sensation. In this material presence, consciousness is awakened, so that a person can be aware of their perception at the moment. In order to understand perception, we need to comprehend the experience of the body that can only be understood through motion (1992). When we encounter a body on screen, as a moving image, various perception modalities in our bodies are awakened. Cinema creates an intersubjective environment and connects the world of the audience with the filmic world which is "*both sense-making and sensible*" in the "*activity of embodied consciousness realizing itself in the world and with others*" (Sobchack, 1992, p.7). In

order to do so, the senses play an important role. With the reference to senses, emotional experiences can be embodied (Barker, 2009). To best elaborate this, I will focus on haptic and audial senses, as these are both salient in Rainer's films and can be used to experience of the spectator.

With haptic sense, the skin will be my starting point. "*Skin is a symbolic interface between Self and the outside world*" according to Benthien (Elsaesser, Hagener, 2010, p.111). It is akin to a border between inner and outer worlds as well as Self and Other. Throughout history, skin has reflected identity issues both on political and personal levels. Irigaray also points out that skin is the first sense perception that the fetus experiences (Marks, 1999). The infant's first relationship with the world is through its skin (1999). As an organ, skin spread out of the body, covers the spatial surface as well as changes, reshapes, peels, and sheds itself (Mattens, 2009). It keeps changing and shifting as our identity does. It is also the 'cover' of what cannot be seen inside (2010). The spatial perception of our body can be experienced with our skin. We grasp our body as a whole even though only one part of it is stimulated (2009). Besides these properties, there are tactile properties such as "*fabrics and materials, animals and weapons, human skin and clothing, construction materials and bodily fluids, grass and trees*" which are dependent on touch because it is incompatible with cultural and linguistic habits (2010, p. 114). The term '*haptic visuality*' is defined by Marks as "*touching a film with one's eyes*", in which the eye's function correlates like touch (1999, xi). Hence, elements of haptic visuality can change the perspective from the eye to the skin. As Sobchack explains her own haptic experience about the opening scene of "*Piano*" (1993), she describes her embodied perception thusly, "*I reflexively if not yet reflectively - already know*" (2004, cited in, Elsaesser, Hagener, 2010, p. 118). Her fingers already knew what was happening before her mind grasped it, thus she became self-aware of her own embodiment through her haptic sense (2010). In this respect, it can be said haptic images "*bring the image closer to the body and the other senses*" (Marks, 1999, p.152). This condition creates empathy and can be said that shortens the distance between the film and the spectator. Thus, haptic visuality is apparent in cinematic genres of feminist and experimental film (1999). Marks suggested that haptic visuality enables the bodily response of the spectator and facilitates other sensory experiences as well which makes film conductive, like skin (1999). Thus, the importance of haptic visuality of involving the body in film cannot be understated.

After the silent era of film, the ontological link between a sound and its source became an important subject. In classical cinema, the sound is considered as the additional layer to visual illusion; whether it is on or off-screen, in or out of a shot, diegetic or non-diegetic, synchronous or non-synchronous. The usage of sound reflected the "*power struggles*" in terms of "*domination and*

*dependency*” (Elsaesser, Hagener, 2010, p. 136). Sound is considered not only a reinforcement of an image but an undetachable union for the classical narrative (2010). Therefore, spectators started to seek the coherence between the body and voice intuitively. This is also related to the dimensionality of the sound. Hearing is three-dimensional while “*seeing is always directional*” (2010, p. 130). We are able to hear from all directions and it gives the sound a spatial quality. Hence, sound encompasses the spectator’s body and expands the cinematic experience. Rudolf Arnheim emphasized that with sound, two-dimensional flat-images are transformed into mimetic realism of three-dimensionality. He considered the union of sound and image was unnatural, because he thought, their parallelity makes the eye superior to the ear. Related to this, when we are not able to locate the source of the sound, the identification that is gathered from the eye is weakened (2010). In this respect, I contend that, as Yvonne Rainer separates the synchronization of speech and image, she aimed to achieve the break the hierarchy of the eye holds in order to shatter the conformist conditioning that the gaze brings. Also, when sound and image are synchronized one can relate to the other, when there is a contrast, irony is created, as Rainer evoked in her films (2010). This also explains why there is a general tendency of synchronizing visual with sound for the sake of an uninterrupted cinematic experience. Another point to consider about hearing is, it refers to the inner self, i.e. what is under the skin. For example, Rainer uses the voice of characters without synchronizing them with their image on the screen; therefore, in a way she reveals the deeper motive of the characters. Voice naturally is an expressive form of an emotional state so it can specifically reveal the emotion: pitch, speech rate, duration of silence, and loudness (Plantinga, 2009). Moreover, “*voiceovers and interior monologues also often feature more knowledgeable or more private and intimate thoughts and feelings than are uttered by characters diegetically*” (Ince, 2017, p.93). “*Sound covers and uncovers, touches and unfolds even the spectator’s body*”; thus, it resembles skin (2010, p. 137). While skin refers to the surface of the body, hearing both correspond to three-dimensionality that holds inner and outer qualities, and “*possesses tactile and haptic qualities*” (2010, p. 137). Moreover, the durational qualities of sound differ from visual and touch. While images can be reproduced in one single moment, sound is only apparent in time as a unifying aspect of a film. For this reason, the usage of sound in a film can break the hierarchy of visuality.

When there are a variety of responses that affects the viewing experience of the audience, how can we speak of unity? Plantinga emphasizes that there is a list of responses; “*cognitive processing*”, “*visceral responses, character engagement*”, “*emotional responses*”, “*viewer’s idiosyncratic associations and memories, moods, pleasures, desires, sexual arousals*”, “*affective mimicry and reflex actions*” as well as “*affect in response narrative, spectacle, setting, music and the spectator’s own prior subjective experience*” (Plantinga, 2009, p.140). Considering this variety of relational



aspects between film and spectator's body, it can simply be said that the affective elements according to filmic narrative are formed and transmitted to the spectator. In order to do so, the associative connection between senses should be taken into account. When one sensory pathway correlates with other sensory pathways, their associative connection would occur<sup>1</sup>. The patterns of the mainstream narrative of a Hollywood film benefits from this association on the behalf of its patterns. These patterns of character-based construction, cause, and effect relationship that directs the audience to ask specific questions and anticipates their emotions. For instance, in melodrama, “*moods, pleasures, motor, and affective mimicry, muscular sympathy, auditory entrainment, facial feedback, emotional contagion, and visceral stimulations*” are used as repeating patterns that work in an associative relationship (Plantinga, 2009, p.147). Similarly, Yvonne Rainer focuses on melodrama in her films by reinventing it.

As scholars such as Marks and Sobchack discuss, Rainer aims to create non-fulfillment of the traditional expectations of the audience by breaking the emotional and sensual patterns in the narrative. She interrupts the preconditioned senses of the audience to create a new association between body and film. To illustrate with a few examples, she uses raging thunder sound to evoke an emotional pattern, but she connects the scene to totally different points or just using symbolic expressions without continuity (Rich, 1989). As emotion and affect are interrelated in her films, she uses extreme close-ups to show an expressionless face while exposing intimate words both as text written on the screen and audial to express emotion. However, the facial expression remains disconnected. In “*Film About a Woman Who...*”, she generates emotion through the rhythm of sound, silence and music while these are not connected to current visual representation. In other words, rhythm of sound has a different stream of consciousness (Wilson, 2015). “*Rainer tends to evoke the psychological aspects of emotion carefully separated from their physiological manifestations*” (2015, p.10). As she considers subversion of the sensual patterns in her narrative, she also creates a unique embodied knowledge, empathy, and relatedness through sound and haptic visuality. Rainer's intentional reference to senses is also supported by her focus on the kinesthetic experience to transmit an emotion.

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<sup>1</sup> *Synesthetic experience can be a subject in this context. Synesthesia refers to the reproduction of one sense as another sense, thus, hearing can be perceived as taste or seeing can be perceived as touch which means one sensory pathway perceived as other sensory pathways. However, it can also be considered as a pathologic situation, therefore I confined myself only with associative connection in order to define inter-sensual relation of senses.*

### 3.2. Kinesthetic Experience in Film

Movement engages the physicality of the viewer. When “*Stories told by the body*” become the study of kinesthetics in the film (Rosenberg, 2013, as cited from, Wood, 2015). When a spectator watches a film or a scene that is based on movements such as a dance or fight scene, kinesthetic empathy occurs in their body. Kinesthetic empathy can be defined as “*the sensation of moving while watching movement*” (2015). *Kine-* means movement and *-aesthetes* means sensation, so when kinesthesia is united with empathy it creates the sensory relationship that is formed between the viewer and performer. The viewer gains corporeal knowledge and experience through kinesthetic empathy and can therefore embody the perspective of the performer. “*And, although the spectator's own kinesthetic activity is drastically reduced when watching a film, the perception of movement and its kinesthetic “sense” or significance seems immensely amplified because of the relative quietude of the spectator's movement. It is as if the spectator's body were kinetically “listening” to the movement of another*” (Sobchack, 1991, p.186). This is further corroborated by Wood, who states; “*kinesthetic empathy is an ‘embodied and imaginative connection between the self and the other’*” (2015). Kinesthetic experience can take place within a movement narrative. A dance scene incorporates a movement narrative that has choreography; there is a narrative construction that is derived from movement. Movement narrative has always an abstract aspect that leaves gaps in the linearity of the story. Wood points out that these gaps in movement-based narratives are filled by the viewer. In this way, the audience can become an active participant of the story which adds value to “*engagement and pleasure in watching screen-dance*” (2015).

There are also some cinematic tools, editing approaches, and directorial choices that are based on the movement of the camera, which involves the spectator's body into the film. Shot lengths and rhythms, the temporal relationship between shots of editing as well as framing and camera movement affects the bodily sensations of the audience and enables the audience to have an embodied response (Plantinga, 2009). According to Eisenstein's interest in “*motor mimicry*”, a filmmaker needs to compose movements through editing shots while the performer executes simplified movements. In this way, he believed the basic bodily responses of the audience could be influenced to create a kinesthetic empathy (Plantinga, 2009). Repetition, slow movement, surreptitious camera movement, character-centered camera movement, and tracking, etc. can affect the bodily response of the spectator (Barker, 2009). Furthermore, the audience can identify with their body in an autogenic way through the replication of muscular gestures of the camera (Barker, 2009). For instance, close-ups can activate this kind of muscle memory-based relationship. Barker

illustrates this with the close-up, which responds to the spectator's "*need for a closer view, aesthetically and narratively speaking*" (Barker, 2009, p.81). It is derived from the muscular movements of our neck. The gesture of the neck leans forward to see more details replicated in a close-up and enables the film to create "*immersive physicality*" (Barker, 2009, p.82). Moreover, close-ups magnify what cannot be seen from distance. For example, when there is a close-up to a face, spatiality is reduced and emphasis on the time sense is increased and facial expressions, discrete gestures are exhibited (Marks, 1999). According to Bela Balasz, "*the world of very small things visible only from short distances, the hidden life of little things*" becomes visible ([1923] 1972, as cited from Marks, 1999, p.94). She also highlighted the underlying quality of close-ups, which reveals what is underneath the surface of appearance while diminishes the distance between the character and audience (Platinga, 1999). On the contrary, long shots achieve the opposite: the distance between the audience and the character grows away while the spatiality of the film is expanded. Long shots indicate the posture of the character, and its environmental relationships (Platinga, 2009). In this way, spectator's spatial perception can be expanded as well. Another example is point-of-view shots that refer to the character's perspective: how and what the character sees, which reveals the emotional state by indicating the focus of the character's attention (Plantinga, 2009). Furthermore, the first-person point of view might activate kinesthetic empathy in a direct way. Alternatively, with editing, consequential relationships between shots can be directed as Rainer did. "*Rainer plays upon audience expectation of filmic tradition and foils its fulfillment*" (Rich, 1989, p.7). She used stereotyped images and sounds in an unusual context. She shocked and redirected the attention of the audience, so that body of the audience can be awakened and involved in the film process. Therefore, according to the usage of cinematic tools in a variety of ways, unrepresentable senses like touch; even smell and taste can be represented in variable ways. Senses can also be evoked in the body kinesthetically in order to embody the ongoing emotion of the narrative by benefiting from cinematic tools.

As Rainer creates meaning through kinesthetic empathy, she also enables an embodied perception by putting forth the interconnectivity between body, film, and embodied sensibility (Hubbard, 2013). Ponty says that our relationship with the world is fundamentally mimetic and that the choices we make are based on a certain accumulation (Sobchack, 19912). Mimesis as a bodily process builds memory through physical learning and especially tactile sensations have a close relationship with the mimesis. Similarly, the relationship between film and audience is mimetic (1992). "*The Greek word mimesis means 'to imitate', suggests that one represents a thing by acting like it*" (Marks, 1999, p.138). The film creates perceptible thoughts and appeals to us to comprehend our physical reality through our bodies. In this regard, the cinema is not an illusion but an extension

of the viewer's embodied existence, as Sobchack (1992) argues. Moreover, we tend to mimic a behavior as it is observed in the “*mirror neurons*” experiment. According to the experiment, when we observe behavior, we tend to imitate it automatically in order to understand the action of the other. It is said that the direct link is then created between the receiver and the sender (Platinga, 2009). This motor mimicry directly affects spectators without their conscious participation, and capturing body language, posture, gesture, facial expressions all affect the viewer both on an emotional and physical level (2009).

### **3.3. Embodied Non-body**

According to phenomenology, our bodies are the source of the meaning; it is not a passive object. Theory of embodiment emphasizes that our bodies “*are sources of meaning themselves*” and this embodiment takes place with the representation of senses (Csordas, 1990, p.7, as derived from Marks, 1999). The feminist work is concerned with these representations, thus the relationship of senses to embodiment became a focus to genres like feminist film, experimental film, and video (1999). Film theorists like Eisenstein, Kracauer, and Benjamin already addressed the sensuous qualities of cinema that “*bodily senses lead the spectator, whose involvement is not strictly intellectual*” (Gaines, 1999 p. 88, original emphasis, as cited from, Hubbard, 2013, p.15). As cinema include the film’s body, spectator’s body, and filmmaker’s body, the nature of filmic experience creates an irreversible and dynamic relationship through senses. The cinema uses both “*embodied modes of embodied existence (seeing, hearing, physical and reflective movement) as the vehicle, the “stuff”, the substance of its language and also structures of direct experience (the “centering” and bodily situating of existence in relation to the world of objects and others) as the basis for the structures of its language*” (Sobchack, 1992, p.5). In this structure of centering the senses, it can be said that mimetic learning is at the core of the cinematic experience. Accordingly, our bodily perception receives rhythm, touch, smell and reflects it to our feelings through our senses. This activates an embodied response (Marks, 1999).

As it can be seen in conventional narrative cinema, visual and audial senses are dominantly used over other senses, a hierarchy of power relations between senses is created. Audial sense differs from visual sense in terms of its dimensionality and temporality. These qualities keep visual sense in a superior position in the film industry. By privileging the visual sense, mainstream culture operates its conditioning mechanisms (Marks, 1999). Furthermore, some theories of embodied spectatorship refer that, visual representation means alienation from the body in which is pertinent to Lacan’s theory of the mirror phase. The mirror phase explains the theory of subjectivity through

the alienation of selfhood which is established by the detachment of the self-image (Marks, 1999). This theory highlights that the body has a perception of its own that is separate from cognition. I contend that this separation can be related to the over-emphasis on visual perception. Merleau-Ponty states that seeing is a “*distance sense*” and constitutes a gap (1999). Since none of the senses function in isolation, each sense has a unique quality that supports each other. Perhaps it is also related to why we perceive film somatically as a whole body, before we cognitively process it. This also enables an unconscious identification (Elsaesser, Hagener, 2010); even if the spectator does not remember the body consciously, they still embrace the experience. When visual sense is central to the cinema, the discussions on the gaze issues, representational manipulations, and ways of looking as I mentioned in the previous chapter can become problematic. That is why I contend that other sensory perceptions are evoked intentionally in a film in order to understand how the interplay between senses creates an embodied perception and how associative (or even synesthetic) relationship between senses creates an autonomous experience through the body of the everyday life<sup>2</sup>.

The everyday body is both portrayed as non-fetishized in experimental film way and proposes a new way of looking. The spectator is invited to experience bodily contact instead of grasping the image only in visual aspects (Marks, 1999). The everyday experience is encoded in senses, especially in non-audiovisual recordings of touch, smell, and taste. Senses store memory thus powerful memories can be encoded in the body through senses because it is stored in the body. In this respect cinema recreate memories, embodies knowledge by appealing senses, hence recreates multi-sensory perception by the involvement of all senses (Marks, 1999). Also, the actual presence of our bodies is correlated with our senses and our bodies carry memory. With a flashback of an instance from the past, we unite our senses from this moment with a stored image, thus we actualize past in the present without interrupting the time. In other words, as Bergson pointed out “*the past is preserved itself, automatically*” (Sutton, Martin-Jones, 2008, p.88). Senses like touch, smell, and taste rather than visual and auditory ones, encode memory (Marks, 1999). Through the non-visual knowledge and experiences of sense, knowledge can be embodied, as Marks said. Film can redirect our memory while enabling our emotions to match with them in order to actualize an experience. Specifically in experimental film, the senses are embodied so that the automatic mechanism between memory and perception can be broken (Marks, 1999). Because, when the viewer comprehends that this is a film, it then becomes a construct, so viewers can become aware of their bodies in the moment and have an experience of filmic body through their senses, instead of being conditioned to feel.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1

As I elaborated that, haptic and audial senses create a kinesthetic experience that enables the corporeality in Yvonne Rainer's films and performances. By keeping the body in the center of her films, she constructs a unique relationship with the audience. Even though the forced connection of visual sense dominates the film, she focuses on breaking the habitual connection of senses and builds a new pathway. Therefore, Rainer deliberately subverts the conditioned patterns of senses, in order to involve the spectator's body in her films through the construction of kinesthetic empathy. I illustrate what I have discussed so far below through close analysis of Rainer's films.

#### 4. ANALYSIS OF YVONNE RAINER'S FILMS

As I elaborated in the first chapter, Rainer's performer, dancer, and filmmaker identity is derived from her personal experiences which can be particularly observed in her early films. Because she brings her own life into her films, her narratives are personal and intimate. In her first feature-length film "*Lives of Performers*", she examined the life of the performers, and gradually she turned her focus towards the everyday life of women. These films that she made in the 1980s are fragments of Rainer's life. Each of them represents a part of her womanhood. In these films, another kind of body is evoked that interrogates "*sex, gender, ethnicity, class and age*" effects on the body. Therefore, in her all films, she examined the lives of women from girlhood to menopause, whether partially or fully, in terms of their identity and sexuality both in public and private life while also expressing her personal experiences as a woman (Petrolle, Wexman, 2005). She achieved to represent women in the context of "*femininity in crisis*" (2005, p.151). Consequently, the subject of hysteria is discussed within her films. Early films show hysteric elements in a disjunctive way and created through editing and melodrama. "*Rainer does not just make melodramas, she uses melodrama's expressionistic aesthetics as a feminist strategy of formal and narrative intervention*" (2005, p.167). In her later films, made in the 1980s, the hysteric expression became more visible through the recalling of events, representing it through discourses and symptoms. In a way, she also embraces the concept of hysteria consciously when she became a feminist and reflects it in her melodrama films (2005).

The psychoanalytic aspect of reading Rainer's film is also correlated with melodrama, as demonstrated by Peter Brooks who states "*psychoanalysis can be as a systematic realization of the melodramatic aesthetic to the structure of the mind*" (2001, as cited from, Petrolle, Wexman, 2005, p.158). Rainer's configurations of characters are based on 'essential relationships' such as patient-therapist relationships in her films, "*Journeys from Berlin*" and "*Privilege*", which engage the private space of therapy to public space. In this way, she makes conflict visible by indicating the

ongoing alienation from the self (Petrolle, Wexman, 2005). Moreover, I mentioned in the second chapter that melodrama always establishes conflicts between good and evil, aspirations to reach greater purpose and defines the desires. These issues are never detached from the self. Therefore, Rainer points out that it is impossible to remove the problem from the public sphere as long it cannot be solved in personal sphere (2005). Brooks points out that melodrama of hysteria occurs when there is repression. (2005). Rainer's last film, "*Murder and Murder*", specifically underlines the repressed issues about her own body that desires to be out loud, despite the cultural conventions (which assume her body as invisible) (2005). "*Murder and Murder*" is representing the true melodramatic nature of conflicts that is between good and evil, the "*us-versus-them*" mindset (2005, p.179). She stretches the story between the love story and her experience with breast cancer. The dichotomy between good and evil is portrayed through lesbian couples as heroines, and homophobia and cancer as villains. Rainer achieves to subvert this duality by not victimizing the disease and lesbian desire. Instead, she challenges the conventions, gives meaning to women's everyday lives and provides alternative representations of women's bodies, especially lesbian bodies (2005). Furthermore, Rainer embraces the less fragmented narrative, more emphasis on bodily erotics, and more synchronized image and sound, which instills more depth within her characters, enabling the audience to more easily identify with these characters.

As an anarchist, Rainer used avant-garde to go beyond the limitations of patriarchal beliefs that enabled her to propose questions that shake the traditional forms of gender, sexuality, women, and artists both in her films and performances (Petrolle, Wexman, 2005). Her performance background also shaped her directing, thus she produced her narratives by using "*choreographed structure and melodramatic mode*" (2005, p.150). When she moved from dance to film after fifteen years of professional dancing and performing career, she said she is interested in dealing with emotions more (Rich, 1989). Because she felt that the dance was limited to transmit emotions. There are, of course, other variety of reasons why Rainer moved to film from dance such as her withdraw from the dance group. Her collective and improvisation-based group, the Grand Union, was the last performance gathering she experienced before starting filmmaking. In this period, she experienced that her own authority was oppressing her. When she let everything flow out of her authority, everything gets messy and it was an irreversible act to gain her authority back. So she completely quit the group (Rainer, 2006). Another reason is, as she gave details in her autobiography, she went through a long process of health issues and had to deal with them for a while. Coincidentally, the timing of her health issues was parallel to her break-up with Bob Morris as well as her latest experiences with Grand Union. Moreover, considering that Rainer was in search of experimenting with body and film, I believe, it was a natural outcome to transfer her medium from dance to film.

After her trip to India, she made one last performance under the name of “*Grand Union Dreams*” which was carrying the seed of her first feature-length film. In her first film, it can be seen that “*Grand Union Dreams*” and the “*Lives of Performers*” (1972) are continuous in terms of their context. They both present rehearsal as an actual performance and the audience's response is central to the piece (Rich, 1989). Before I examine her performance and film works, I would like to elaborate further on Rainer's filmic style and visual methods to decode it.

#### 4.1. Filmic Style

As I mentioned before, Rainer's practice is encompassed by avant-garde and correlated with Brecht's approach to staging. Brechtian strategies of separating performer from representation as well as playing with the distance of performance and audience can be observed in Rainer's representations both on stage and screen (also called as *Verfremdungseffekt*). As Brecht does, she focuses on the estrangement of the character and audience from the narrative, usage of improvisatory and repetitive movements, projecting text and images (Glahn, 2009). Relatedly, Rainer shapes her visual language with these aims in mind. She used slow motions, jump cuts, long takes, addressing the camera in a direct way, using repetitive scenes in which she can execute a corporeal relationship with the audience and performer. She breaks the illusion and artificiality in order to bring the pure embodiment into the present. In a way, she affirmed a subjectivity of what is happening at the moment.

Habits of the spectators, conditionings of seeing our bodies were always a concern in Rainer's work (Thompson, 2010). In this respect, Rainer initiated an “*object-like treatment*” to the representation of bodies in order to point out that bodies can be treated, as they are a thing. She embraced the neutral doer in her early films, and she aimed to create a conflict between body and narrative by downplaying “*the body and privileging text as expressive instrument*” (Petrolle, Wexman, 2005, p.153). As she chose melodrama, she wanted to keep bodies as stable as possible without reflecting the hysteria. She only wanted to convey the emotion itself thus she portrayed bodies in the reoccurring events and with split focus. She aimed to break the coherence of the identification process of the audience by using, anti-narrativity, ventriloquist approaches, and different modes of address. In this way, she invented a new understanding of spectatorship (Thompson, 2010).

“*Like Brecht, juxtaposes familiar forms, images, and ideas in order to confront them, opening up a participatory space wherein an imagination to see and act outside prescribed confines of experience is made possible*” (Glahn, 2009, p.93). What Rainer does is create critical thinking and



encourage imagination in her films. Her cinema contributed to the “*discursive*” or “*intellectual cinema*” in which spoken word is significant and creates an argument (2009). Discursive cinema is concerned with “*the mental activation of the viewer*” and also includes self-referential and formal analysis (Gidal, 1975, as cited from, Glahn, 2009, p.80).

Rainer's relevance with Brecht not only affected her spectatorial approaches but also her way of representing the issues of private vs public. Her lens provides private, public, and counter-public aspects that encompass the historical and theoretical background of the related subjects (Glahn, 2009). Habermas pointed out that our privacy is continuously monopolized by capitalism and forms our individual identity that causes a self-alienation. Rainer was also aware that there was a constant attack from outer factors. Therein, she embraced corporeality because she considered the body remains as “*the enduring reality*” (2009, p.79). In this respect, Rainer believes, kinesthetic empathy that regulated in actual time can create a private, individual, and subjective experience for a person (2009). When she becomes aware that the spectator's bodily response is limited when there is only a bodily language, she shifted her attention to emotions. She grasped that emotion is the way our bodies function. Therefore, her interest in minimalism flourished. Minimalism comprises the mundanity and eliminates distancing devices while it positions a new relationship with the viewer through space and time (Petrolle, Wexman, 2005). Minimalism also gives primacy to “*phenomenological experience, perception and presence*” (2005, p.150). In this respect, her focus on the ‘*neutral body*’ was influential on her works and on her feminist views as well. Rainer's usage of “*neutral doers*” is apparent both in her films and performances (2005). In this way, she embodies the sexed and gendered body in a subverted way unlike the history of gendered representations as well as framed her works in the scope of non-gendered and non-specific subjects (2005).

Early times of her film career, she did not tend to identify her work as feminist, but as she progressed, specifically after her three films, she embraced feminism. This progression is also related to her actualization that as a woman she never considered herself as a minority and yet she happens to be one (Petrolle, Wexman, 2005). Her first three films, “*Lives of Performs*”, “*Film about a Woman Who...*”, and “*Kristina Talking Pictures*”, reflect her minimalist approach to the body as a *neutral doer*. This leads her to question subjectivity while elaborating her concerns on the sexed and gendered subjects, which is an important part of feminist discourse (2005).

Another featuring aspect of Rainer's films and performances is related with the usage of her own voice. She considered herself as a ventriloquist. Ventriloquism is an expression of one's voice without exposing the source of it and the enunciation of one's perspective through any other source. Also defined as “*to be heard, is to be seen*” (Petrolle, Wexman, 2005, p.162). Ventriloquism

became a central strategy of Rainer's expression. As an artist, she reflected her thinker side onto screen and stage (2005). With ventriloquism, she expressed her political views, especially on feminist issues. Specifically, she focused on how women are represented in mass culture. Rainer as an artist/woman discovered her own voice by giving others a voice in a critical manner. "*Through a cinematic ventriloquism, Yvonne Rainer "speaks" her self into being*" (2005, p.151). As Rainer wrote in her 1981 essay, "*Looking Myself in the Mouth*", she expressed her narrational connection between theory and practice. She underlines the delicate connection between vision and language that eventuate in her films as verbal texts and images. In this essay, she interrogates the possibilities of getting rid of the conventional narrative structure and character identification. It is also possible to say that her habitual behavior to be self-reflexive in her works is reflected in her writing and speaking as well. As the title of her essay refers, she has a tendency to have a self-analysis (2005). In that sense, the discursive aspect of Rainer's filmmaking becomes prominent with the usage of her voice.

As a ventriloquist, Rainer incorporates others' words and images to create a characteristic method of self-critique (Petrole, Wexman, 2005). I elaborated in the first chapter that Rainer's self-reflexive approach can be observed in her film and performance works as well as in her writings. She also expands the 'self' theme in her textual practices. Perreault wrote on this; "*Like all writing, feminist self-writings is informed by the experiences of the everyday, of the body, of the sites of contact with and isolation from the read-about and lived-in worlds*" (2005, p.153). This definition resembles Rainer's approach to producing films with the 'self' theme. She appropriates other voices, fragments them, and creates a dialogue with herself and her audience, which is an ongoing dialogue that requires the participation of the audience (2005). Her visual and textual collage builds her ventriloquism.

## **4.2. Films & Visual Analysis**

### **4.2.1. "Trio A"**

Rainer's first formal performance "*Three Satie Spoon*" was presented in 1961 at *the Living Theatre* (Rich, 1989). She concentrated on pure movement that is derived from everyday life and ordinary body movements. In this way, she focused only on the body as the body just for itself (1989). On the stage, she focused on the abstraction of the body. However, the body was limited in terms of using abstraction. When she began filmmaking, she focused on the abstraction of the body which became a salient aspect of her films (1989). Analyzing her noteworthy work "*Trio A*" (1965) is a good example of how she transmits her attitude towards the body in film. Because *Trio A* is both a performance and a film, it has a long-lasting life. Rainer presented this work over 15 years in a

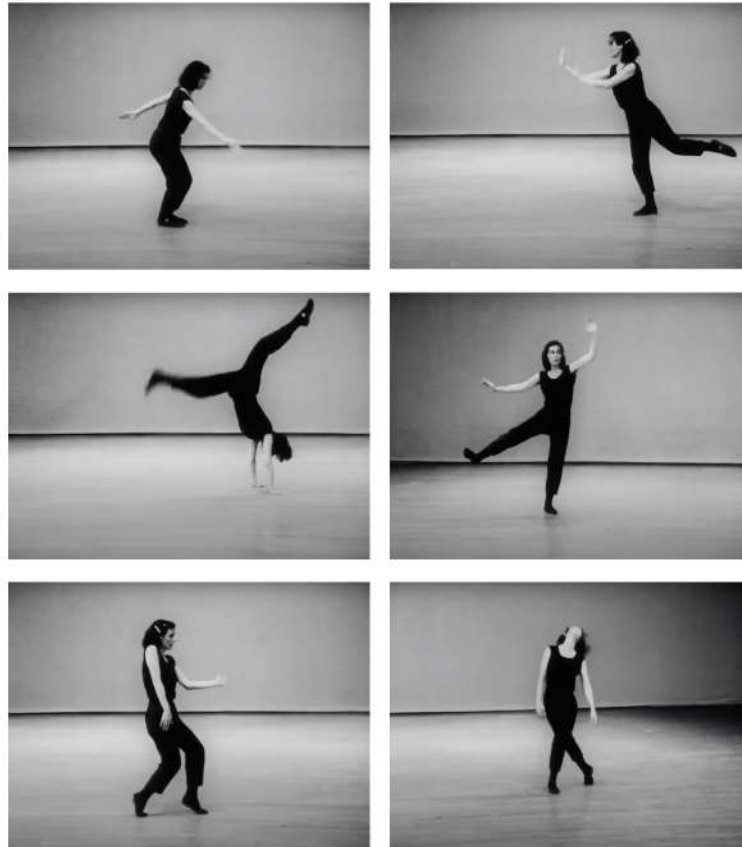
variety of ways. After she made her well-known “*No Manifesto*” with the aim of rejecting modernist dance tendencies, she produced *Trio A* as a part of longer work called, “*The Mind Is a Muscle, Part I*” in 1965 at Judson Memorial Church in New York City. Rainer considered this five-minute-long piece as her “*warhorse*” because of its long-lasting life (Bryan-Wilson, 2012, p.57). *Trio A*, was a refusal of what is expected from dance. It rejected the habitual view of choreography by not conforming to the expected movement literature. Sally Banes called this dance; “*democracy’s body*”, because; it was populist, egalitarian, and nonhierarchical; there was no narrative, no interest in classical climax and emphasis; and it was open to anyone who wanted to practice it. Rainer aimed to bring a new way of looking at the dancing body. By bringing a new understanding and awareness to the perception of the audience, she aimed to make the audience ask questions about the body, such as “*what the Body is all about?*” In this way, she teaches her audience a new way of looking (2012, p.68). The focus on the body was central to the structure of *Trio A*. 12 years after its premiere, in 1978, a 16mm documentation of *Trio A* was produced, which outlined the choreography and provided visual access to people all over the world. The film version enabled many to learn *Trio A*, which was one of the Rainer’s primary objectives, as she was insistent about teaching *Trio A* to anyone who wanted to learn. She gave permission to trusted people to teach and perform the piece.

The structure of *Trio A* can be examined through the aspects of body, movement, duration, and spectator. Rainer prioritised importance to the consistency through the body, time, and space, and perceived the whole performance as “*one continuous photogenic moment*” (Lambert-Beatty, 2010, p.228). The following sentence, written entirely in lower case without spaces or punctuation, can be interpreted as an allegory of *Trio A*:

thereisnopartofthisarticlethatisanymoreimportantthananyotherparteachwordsentenceparaphcarriesthesameweightasanyotheranditssmoothnessliesnotonlyintheequalweightednessofeachwordsentenceandparaphraphybutinthejuxtapositionofoneparaphraptanotherwhichcausethereadertoreacttothisarticleasawholeratherthanassegments (2010, p.228)

As a dance piece that is open to both trained and amateur dancers, Rainer focused on the ‘*ordinary body*’. No part of the body is more important than another, thus the egalitarian nature of the body is apparent. There is no gender specificity and identification on sexuality-related matters. Rainer chose casual clothing for costumes to underscore the everyday life aspect of the body. In addition to this, the movements are especially simple and based on pedestrian movements. Nothing is emphasized, there are no poses, no rest, or speed up and slow down, hence each motion signifies the body itself (*Collage 4.2.1*). In that sense, the movements contain a noticeable aspect of simplicity. Movements

are clear and one movement follows another to show 'one thing after another'. In this respect, movements seem 'task-like', fragmented and effortless, which strongly draws from the Rainer's Avant-garde influences. By removing the distinction between life and art, Rainer questions the form and structure of the body, therefore, breaks the illusion on the stage through movement.



Collage 4.2.1

In this movement literature, there is no music that accompanies the dance that enables dancers to articulate the choreography at their pace and tempo and each performer performs the same movements together without unison. This creates different configurations during the performance. The lack of music makes it difficult to synchronize to dance for the spectator. (Bryan-Wilson, 2012). Rainer subverted pre-established patterns of "spectatorship, representation, and embodiment" in her films (Brannigan, 2008, p.116). The male gaze, in this respect, was continuously averted. She also focused on the avoidance of eye contact, even when the dancer directed to the audience, the dancer's eyes look somewhere else or closed. Thus the face had a blank and neutral expression. Rainer wanted the dancer to be concerned only with their body, not with the spectator.

Considering that *Trio A* has a very precise structure and process of execution, making and teaching through the film version was a challenge for Rainer and there was some discontentment on her side. Because she had a meticulous personality, she commented that the camera's fixed position or

tendency to foreshorten the character could not reveal the whole of the choreography (Glahn, 2009). It was difficult to comprehend the spatiality. However, Rainer believed that the film version can expand the spectrum of Trio A in terms of teaching method and extend the endurance of the piece throughout the time. Also in 2003, *Trio A* was notated in the Labanotation system, which was a graphic charting system to archive choreography in a written way as a script. By notating the choreography, Rainer could “*set the record straight*” and allowed her to foreground the one-on-one pedagogical encounter; the importance of the interpersonal transmission of the dance motions (Bryan-Wilson, 2012, p.65). It became a “*living archive*” As Catherine Wood puts it (2012, p.65). All of these reinventions through a variety of mediums added another layer to *Trio A*. It was a performance, film, drawing, discourse, teaching material, and open to anyone who wants to perform it. I contend that Trio A is a unified work of Rainer which both reflects her personality, her approach to body and dance as well as in the core demonstrates her filmmaking. In her future works, Rainer explored the possibilities of filmmaking while deepening her research on the body, gender, movement, and interaction with the audience. Therefore, Trio A is the signature work that encompasses her unified artistic style.

#### 4.2.2. “Lives of Performers” and “Film About a Woman Who...”

Rainer once said, “*as someone reminded me recently, I’ve already written my autobiography in my films*”, so that, her first feature-length film “*Lives of the Performers*” (1972), introduces her autobiographical entrance to the film world (Petrolle, Wexman, 2005, p.152). Rainer also sub-titled this film as, “*Lives of Performers: A Melodrama*” in which the film’s title already introduces the context (Rich, 1989). As Rainer produced improvisatory, rehearsal-based performances with her dance group just before starting filmmaking, she also created the same environment in this film (Rich, 1989). The performance is the rehearsal itself, and the film is united with the backstage, thus, the nature of the film is based on breaking the illusion between performance & rehearsal, as well as, film & reality, and becomes a search for subverting the classical narrative. The storyline refers to her own romantic relationship with Bob Morris so that Rainer presents her personal life as her autobiography in an experimental and intertwined way with the live performance.

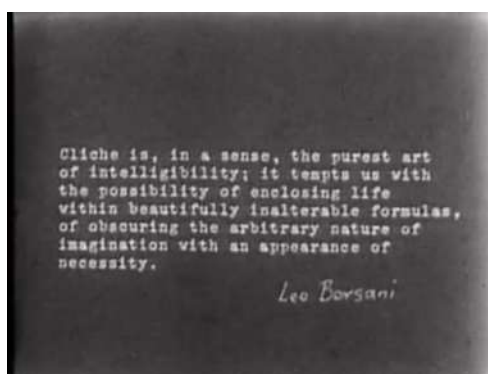
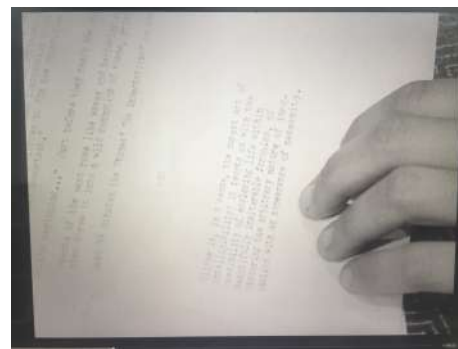


Figure 4.2.1

The opening scene starts with a quote from Leo Bersani about the definition of ‘*Cliché*’. It precedes Rainer’s subject of experimentation. The written scenes like this one, *Figure 4.2.1* appear multiple times during the film. After this scene, the ongoing rehearsal scene starts in which sounds are removed and the voiceover speaks in a non-synced way with the image. The sounds of ambiance, street sounds, and voices of dancers along with Rainer’s voice accompany the rehearsal. A camera tracks and explores around the space as if it is flowing randomly, showing different dancer bodies that are moving. This movement accent of the camera is visible throughout the film so that our body as an audience is involved in motion. While we are experiencing the rehearsing process, we are part of the rehearsing group as an audience as well. The authority of Yvonne Rainer becomes visible in the dance studio as a leading role as she also wrote in the script; “*a woman appears to be the director or choreographer. Although we see them speaking the soundtrack is silent. After about four minutes the sound surges up. The director is counting a repetitive ‘One, two, three, four, one two....’*” (Rainer, 1989, p.59). Her visual introduction of herself both portrays her choreographer and dancer identity who is also dancing with performers, as well as her director identity encompassing the whole. With this unifying aspect, Rainer’s approach to the film reveals itself as a mediated art form that unites the dancer and audience with “*a new sense of commonality*” (Wilson, 2015, p.4).



*Figure 4.2.2*



*Figure 4.2.3*

In the next sequence, static, photography-based scenes stream at a slow pace. The non-diegetic dialogues and Rainer’s voice speaks while the photos of the performance with *Grand Union* appears on the screen. Voices are mechanic and unveil that is read from a script. Besides Rainer’s voice, a man and a woman voice have a dialogue, which gradually reveals a melodramatic storyline. Also, the static imagery of performance photos depicted with the pages of the scenario and accompanies the dialogue. This reference to a coalescence of the film with performance is pointed out visually (*Figure 4.2.2*). Dialogue is based on third person speech. A woman refers to herself as ‘she’ and a man as ‘he’. Whenever Rainer reads something, she refers to the character’s real-life names as if

she is the only one who has the authority to name people. Hence, she binds real-life and fictional narratives to each other. Moreover, in this way, Rainer both involves herself in dialogue, but at the same time putting a distance, because she is not only part of the story, she is also the constant narrator and director of it. The way she communicates with the audience also creates another sort of distance “*in order to destroy one*” so that the classical structure of narrative and identification can be broken (Glahn, 2009, p.79). This approach also enables her to connect to the audience from a new and intimate point of perspective.



Figure 4.2.4



Figure 4.2.5

When the image started to move again, a shot of the script becomes visible, and dialogues are continuing as if it referring that what we are hearing now going to start (*Figure 4.2.3*). As a matter of fact, characters that were having a dialogue become visible while the same structure of voiceover is continuing. The extreme close-up of the camera moves around the body parts. While it withdraws, the environment becomes visible. In this way, our perspective as audience shifts from a private space to a spatial one. Also, camera movement supports the dialogue and shows small movements. For example, when a voice reads; “*He wants to know why she's afraid*”, the male character Fernando appears in the foreground of the woman character, Shirley, and moves out of the frame (*Figure 4.2.4*). The camera in this sequence is in constant movement; there is no stable position of it. I contend that the continuity of camera movement correlates with the pace and content of the dialogue while creating a sensation of movement for the spectator's body. When the character, *Figure 4.2.5*, pauses and feels confused, the motion of the camera becomes erratic and then floats around. This floating motion of the camera sometimes pauses as well and leaves some parts of the body off-screen. Sometimes characters continue to come and go on and off the screen. In this way, Rainer enables us to embody the perspective of a character. The mise-en-scene is simplistic: the room consists of one bed, two chairs, and one door to enter which is rearranged over the duration of the piece. Rainer's usage of props also indicates the correlation between her performance and film work, such as a bed and mattress, which were objects that she used in her

performances and other films. Furthermore, the simple and minimalist approach to environment design is coherent with the non-expressive expression of characters and provides clarity in the narrative.



Figure 4.2.6

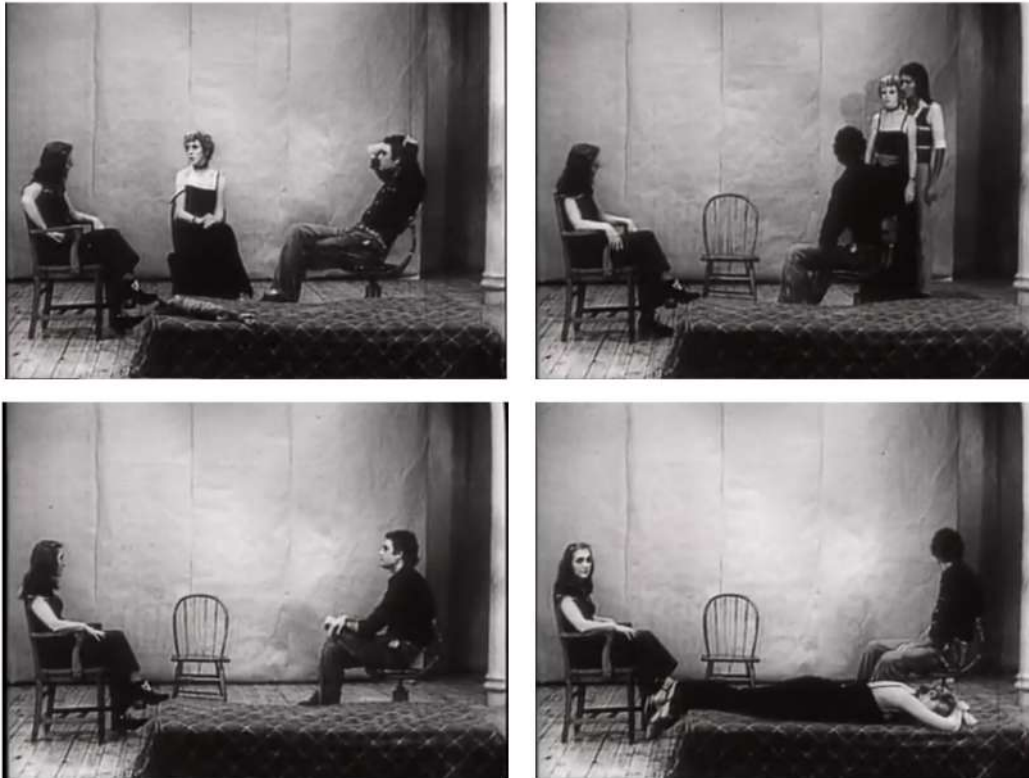


Figure 4.2.7

The film's melodramatic aspect revolves around the transmission of emotions and unfolds in the narrative of a love triangle. There is a continuous and ongoing conversation about emotions throughout the film. However, Rainer avoids expressing them with *clichés* while the narrative incorporates *cliché* in relationship dynamics. Glahn defines it as, “*an intimacy grounded in the real-time experience of a projected (onscreen) and intersubjective (viewer-protagonist) romantic relationship*” (2009, p.79). Moreover, Rainer allows her characters express their emotions while keeping their expressions numb and the tone of their voices stable. In doing so, she aims to reflect only emotions, not the pre-defined patterns about emotions. The audience often feels alienated because there is no direct connection between the character herself and her voice, in other words, there is no indication that the characters' own inner voice is her own voice. What we see is not correlated with what we hear, however, we are still able to see and hear what the character feels. (Figure 4.2.6). This scene also displays the complexity, confusion, and rhythm of the love triangle with their bodily movement. The choreography shows how their response changes towards each other. Such as when the male character turns towards woman “number one” (the narrator's voice states the numbering), the woman “number two” turns her back to him. The subsequent sequence, Figure 4.2.7, shows woman number two who is visible in close up and speaks in sync. She asks; “*Which woman is the director most sympathetic to?*” and then the other woman replies, “*I think No. 1, maybe simply because she appears first.*” The usage of synchronization specifically evokes the subject of empathy while detaching us from the narrative flow, because the question is directed to the spectator. I would argue that synchronized image and voice enable the spectator to empathize with woman number two. With this approach, opposition is continued in the identification process.



Additionally, Rainer gives clues about the situation that women go through. *'Which woman is chosen?'*: as if, Rainer as a director claims her gaze.



*Collage 4.2.2*

Rainer builds an unexpected connection between the women, unlike a conventional narrative of Hollywood. These two women who love the same man connect to each other in an unconventional way which is especially apparent after the dream scene. In the dream sequence of woman number two (Valda) tells her dream. She speaks from the first person narrating and uses 'I' instead of 'she', so that audience can directly empathize with her. The dream refers to her childhood self and gives details about her feelings. Considering dream memory is an intimate detail about one's consciousness, it becomes an establishing connection between two women. Thus, two women get **closer**, hug each other with sympathy and understanding. Later their connection continues with the letter that woman number one (Shirley) sends to Valda. She analyses Fernando and verbalizes her sympathy towards Valda. Their connection, in general, refers to that, these two women are not enemies and don't see each other from the male perspective. Unlike, they understand each other's feelings. Even they can be connected and express what they feel to each other instead of feeling obliged to be rivals. Indeed, in the next sequence, they sit together along with John. To open a parenthesis, even if the love triangle story goes between Shirley, Valda, and Fernando, another male character John is involved in the relationship. In the sequence when Shirley, Valda, and John sit together, Fernando also enters the scene. However, this sequence gives an impression of rehearsal.

The camera has a fixed position in *Collage 4.2.2* but the scene repeats with cut scenes. The long shot of the camera enables us to see the character's relationship with each other and with the environment. Each cut depicts another version, for example, another movement of Valda and Fernando while Shirley and John sit in the same position. Even sometimes they look at the camera and the scene cuts again and again. Another interpretation would be, this repetition could refer to the time passage that shows the changes in the relationship between Valda and Fernando because slowly, at each cut, they separate from each other physically.



*Collage 4.2.3*

The last act of the film consists of continuous photography-like footage in which characters pose and wait, when the shot is done, they exit the pose, and the scene cuts to another pose *Collage 4.2.3*. The poses are melodramatic in terms of expression and poses, and variable in terms of numbers (35 shots). As Rainer plays with double, triple people combinations in her choreography, the poses in

this photo sequence, consist of these variable modes as well. In another aspect, characters become performers by showing us how they resolve from the pose so that they remind us that, the story is unfolding, broken into pieces. There is no possibility to talk about a specific narrative anymore because there is an excessive expression of characters and a variety of pose combinations with characters who were not visible in the story. However, these characters perhaps refer to dancers from the beginning of the film, so that Rainer once again indicates the intertwined nature of her film and dance. Before poses are finishing “*No Expectations*” from the Rolling Stones starts to play as if Rainer wants to neutralize the narrative and affirms our inner voice by stating ‘there is nothing to expect.’

Each time Rainer finishes a scene she gave a black screen breakout, and a countdown starts until the next scene appears. I contend that, in this way, she finishes an act as it is happening in theatre. This transition, in a sense, refers to a stage in a classical theatre and incorporates the liveness of performance into the film as well as underlines the synesthetic nature of the film with performance. Also, considering the fragmented composition of the narrative, using repetition and inter-titles, magical disappearances, using melodramatic use of close-ups indicates that Rainer reinventing the film while referring to it (Green, 1994). Shelly Green defines her camera movement as balletic because of its constant movement in a clockwise motion, rhythmic presence, slow down, and speed up moments. She says there is a “*convergence of the two art forms*” (1994, p.15). This also refers that, Rainer’s choreographer identity merges with her director identity so that, her fragmented approach towards performance, body, editing, camera movements, image, and text can be able merged under the roof of film. Moreover, Rainer’s editing technique reminds me of her approach to creating choreography. She approached movements of each body part particularly. While isolating one move from another, she also underlined the each individual movement. For example, she let her feet turn in one direction and then swings the arms while her eyes look at a specific point. In a similar manner, she focuses on a moment in the film, cuts to a close-up in order to show just one gesture. Or lets the camera’s eye float around so that it can pause, and movements can come back and forth can in order to reflect a specific emotion. In this way, she interrupts the rhythm, focuses on one thing, breaks the flow of the narrative, so that breaks the expectations of the spectator constantly as she does in her choreography. In other words, she self-reflexively achieves to express her non-illusionistic perspective, while experimenting with sound and language, as well as built a distinct structure that is different from traditional narrative codes (Green, 1994).

Similar to *Lives of Performers*, her second feature-length film “*A Film About a Woman Who...*” (1974) also exhibits a continued aesthetic approach and experimentation. As the title announces the nature of the film, Rainer also announces that the ‘film’ aspect is apparent in this film. In other

words, '*cinematic narrative*' will be her main concern of this film (Green, 1994). As she continues to explore emotional space through the narrative, her method to reach climax emerges with the emotional resolution of the central theme (Rich, 1989). She said she wanted to achieve a kind of Aristotelian catharsis by stimulating them with "*empathetic unease*" (Kaplan, 1983). She expresses time in a circular motion as she refers to this with visual elements, such as using a ball in variable sequences or using elliptic camera movements. In that sense, the fragmented and abstracted narrative structure is continuing. The only constant is "*emotion itself*" (1989, p.9). This psychological meeting ground is also a feminist act, because for a long time, women's feelings were undervalued and denied, and women's bodies misrepresented. Since melodrama, as the genre that is propped up on emotional subjects, Rainer's method to subvert and redefine it can be considered revolutionary. Emotional resolution means finally letting women release their emotions (1989). Moreover, she was aware that love relationships can easily correlate with dominant narrative *clichés* so that she aimed to free emotions from stereotypes and represent them in their pure form as much as possible (1983). "*She is concerned to portray emotional issues or conflicts without falling into the ideology that structures these struggles in bourgeois capitalism*" (1983, p. 116).

The film's title also precedes a mystery about the woman's story that is going to be unfolded. In *Lives of Performers*, there is a dilemma of a man who is not able to choose between two women, and how both women feel was portrayed; in *Film about a Woman Who*, the woman's conflicts about herself and resentment against a man, is an ongoing subject while projecting variable combinations of love relationships. Rainer said that all her movies "*dealt with the question of sexual impasse*" (1989, p.30). This entanglement generally originated from the conflicts that a woman carries about herself. A female protagonist in this film has anxiety regarding her body and obligation to have a 'perfect image', thus the frustration about herself arises and keeps echoing throughout the film. In that sense, her relationship with her body, with man, and with time became a conflict so the psychology of melodrama is created (Yang, 2007). Rainer presents every type of woman in this film by scrutinizing paradoxical images of perfection, deformity with subtexts of self-criticism and self-doubt (Green,1994). She portrays their disappointments that are caused by a male-oriented society. In this respect, women express their feeling without being an object of the male gaze. Thus, they use their voices about their confusions. Even Rainer raises her voice about her feminist identity; "*would like to engage in politics but can't decide*" through a female character.

The film consists of the usage of Brechtian devices for distancing; sound and image disjunctions, the juxtaposition of moving pictures and still photography, emphasis on artificial family structures, sense of disconnection, written texts and shots, relationships as psycho-social structures which seems like private issues but they are actually public (Glahn, 2009). Rainer managed to "*generalize*

*her private experiences through her distancing devices*” (Kaplan, 1983, p.118). Nevertheless, she was the center of the story; with the narrative itself, with narration voice, and as her apparent self-image in the narrative (Yang, 2007). The personal aspects of her life especially revealed in the exploration of memory from her personal past. She shares details about her relationship that correlates with the memoirs that she wrote in her book, *“Feeling are Facts”*. The storyline is shuffled and juxtaposed in which creates a narrational puzzle. She also combines with different media; photos, slides, texts which are considered as mnemonic devices (Green, 1994). In this way, she combines autobiographical materials with fictional and documentary material to create a unified whole.



Figure 4.2.8



Figure 4.2.9

There are more text usage and more narration of Rainer’s voice, unlike *Lives*. When Rainer’s narration voice starts, she uses third-person expression to refer to characters as ‘she’ and ‘he’. In *Lives*, Rainer was referring to characters with their real names which strengthens the documentary quality of the film. This enabled her to empower the nexus between life & documentary as well as rehearsal & performance. However, in *Woman who*, her reference to characters as ‘she’ and ‘he’ in which empowers the fictional aspect of the film as well. After the title sequence, the film starts by showing four characters watching a screen along with the non-diegetic thunder and rain sounds (Figure 4.2.8). These sounds do not correspond to classical expectations of sensual stimuli. In this way, Rainer subverts the embodied response of the audience and creates a new pathway for sensory perception. Only two characters were familiar from her previous film and all of them positioned as spectators as if she is reminding us of our stance, as an audience. It can be considered as a visual reference of, describing that what we are watching is also what we are in Kaplan states that with *Lives of Performers*, Rainer; *“first, allows us to see how she constructs her film, and second, she teaches us how to read “Film about a Woman Who...” through the device of the audience within the film”* (Kaplan, 1983, p.116). In *Lives*, the audience is constructed within the narrative, the audience is part of the script and the rehearsal ambiance creates humor and continuously reminds us that we are watching a performance in the form of a film. In *Woman who*, the audience is not responding within the narrative anymore. Even though the film starts and ends by positioning

characters as spectators who are watching the screen, there is no other visual or audial reference to guide as she did in *Lives* (Figure 4.2.9). In this respect, Rainer uses distancing devices in a more complex manner so that she can break the identification process of the audience. She approaches more imaginative, symbolic language that has more written words in it instead of directly referring to the audience within the narrative.



Figure 4.2.10



Figure 4.2.11

She challenges the spectator with directed questions and fragments the flow of the narrative. As I mentioned, emotion, as the constant focus in the narrative, Rainer let the characters use the first-person expression to state what they are feeling such as; “*I am living a loneliness I never expected. I feel so vulnerable, so inferior, so unsure of myself*” (Green, 1994, p. 32). Rainer also provided long silent sections in which opens up a space for watching bodily movements. For instance, in the scene where the protagonist woman’s sexual fantasy takes place, silence is dominant and each movement is implemented at a very slow pace (Figure 4.2.10). In this prolonged scene, a couple strips the woman slowly, in a theatrical space. While the camera is witnessing, the sculptural aspect of movement creates a dreamlike ambiance. The sexual movement is projected as self-controlled and even mechanical. The gaze of the male character is numb, empty, and especially directed to somewhere else (Figure 4.2.11). This gives the reference that; the male gaze is set back and subverted. The couple does not show any emotion and acting in an expressionless face. The camera shows slow-motion movements in close-up as if it is showing the hidden things to us. Even though the scene refers to sexuality, she prevents identification by using slow-motion movements and numb expressions. While the camera zooms out, Rainer appears, sitting next to them. The whole scene becomes visible and Rainer’s existence refers to the realness. In a way, the scene that refers to the fantasy of a woman is real, so that the sexuality of a woman is validated. Rainer has newspaper pieces patched on her face that also refer to a political law case in which the love letters were used to weaken a woman and victimize her on emotional levels (Figure 4.2.12). Rainer creates juxtaposition between these newspaper patches and the naked woman's body. The naked body of the woman is also a reference to showing one’s true identity, without any addition. Moreover, in society, a woman's genital is a strong taboo and undergoes censorship. Smelik states that after 1970

with feminist movement showing “*vaginal and clitoral iconography*” is a celebration of female sexuality (2001, p.160). She also says, “*representability and respectability*” are connected when the subject is about woman genitals, then the issue of entitlement occurs (2001, p.160). In this respect, Rainer makes a clear statement that she is challenging the censor and archaic fear of patriarchal views. As well, she shows that she is not intimidated by the dominance of the male gaze.



Figure 4.2.12



Figure 4.2.13

The slowing of the time aspect also continues into the next scene. In this scene, two women dance or fight in contact in slow motion. Slow-motion involves the audience in movement kinesthetically. Simultaneously, Rainer narrates her memory of the age of nine, where she was deeply affected by the fight scene of two women and oddly, she reacted with laughter<sup>3</sup>. The way she portrays it is far from being violent. So the image in her mind creates contrast with what we are watching (Figure 4.2.13). With this contrast, Rainer interrupts our kinesthetic involvement and enables us to receive her feelings and connect them to this image even though they do not correspond. The following scene summarizes Rainer's statement in words. The phone rings 4 times and Rainer speaks: “*This is the poetically licensed story of a woman who finds it difficult to reconcile certain external facts with her image of her own perfection. It is also the same woman's story if we say she can't reconcile these facts with her image of her own deformity.*”



Figure 4.2.14



Figure 4.2.15

<sup>3</sup> A memory that she mentioned in her autobiography “*Feelings are Facts*”

In both films, there are specific resemblances. In both of the films, Rainer uses a ball. In *Lives*; in the dream sequence and Valda's solo, the ball is used (*Figure 4.2.14*). In *Woman who*, the ball is part of the beach scene (again with a little girl, but a bigger ball, in a family scene) (*Figure 4.2.15*). Also in Rainer's multi-media work "*Rose Fractions*", there were two short films along with a performance. One of the films consisted of a naked man and a woman who are playing big a big round-shaped balloon (*Figure 4.2.16*). In this respect, a ball can be considered as a connecting object of her films and performances. I contend to say that the ball also refers to memory and the subconscious of a character in Rainer's works. Also, symbolically, a circle or round shape has various meanings; unity, oneness, spirit, unified opposites (yin-yang), absolute, multiplicity, existence, emptiness, softness (without edge correlates with without ego), completion, and many more. Perhaps, it can be said that considering the scenery that Rainer used the ball; child, dream, dance, and movement-based scenes, the ball reflects some kind of direct expression of the subconscious. When Valda, in *Lives*, doing her solo, she dances with the ball, she reflects her situation in the love triangle. Her solo refers to a woman's position as a spectacle because she is dancing for the man, more specifically for male gaze. However, it turns out more than that, Valda goes beyond being an object of the gaze, because her movements express her feelings (Kaplan, 1983). The interrupted flow of dance breaks the possible identification and voyeuristic gaze. Also, movements are not sexualized, in repetition, minimalistic, incorporate with long pauses, and do not correspond to the gaze of the viewer (no direct eye contact). As a dancer who worked with Cunningham, Valda's movements are both classical and simplistic. In that sense, her movements open space for a kinesthetic experience, because the audience's embodied perception is enabled through the sensation of movement. Thus, Rainer opens a space for embodied spectatorship. Valda also dances with her shadow at the back which also has a circle shape (*Figure 4.2.14*). Thus, this can also be a reference to her subconscious through the symbol of the circle as if her hidden emotions reflected through her movements. Also, there is an interesting visual contrast is apparent between the images of Valda and Fernando. Valda is in a circle and plays with the ball as if she is discovering about herself. Later, Fernando is found in the square box, not moving and seems stuck (*Figure 4.2.17*). As if Rainer wants to refer to their progress and difference. As Valda dances with the ball, she holds it, plays with it, drops it; but it comes back and changes her posture. The movements are about falling, regaining balance, changing posture, having quick-slow moments, and adjusting bodily positions which akin to her emotions (Kaplan, 1983). In this respect, it can be said that Rainer not only breaks the male gaze but also subverts it.





Figure 4.2.16



Figure 4.2.17



Figure 4.2.18

On the other hand, in *Woman Who*, there is a couple dancing at the ending of the film. The dance scene starts with a couple tossing the ball to each other. With a cut scene to a black screen, the audience reference takes place (Figure 4.2.9), and the couple connected to each other with the ball (Figure 4.2.18). They have continuous movements to back and forth, at a fast and slow pace. The black screen scene, audience screen, extreme close-ups, and cut scenes of movement shows that Rainer is experimenting with editing along with choreography. For instance, in Valda's solo, the camera position only does pan from a one-sided perspective. However, in the couple's solo, there are close-ups to show continuity as if we are in the private space of dancers. Also, perspective shifts, changes of environment, and lighting occur. Dancers dance in the dark or run around near the sea. Relatedly shot length shifts from close to long in order to enable us to connect them with their environment while grasping the dance from a distanced view. In this way, Rainer also shifts our perception and lets us embody the perspective of the performer. Also, her usage of cinematic tools increases the physicality of the movements. The black screen scene cuts the visual flow many times as if it is representing shifts between acts or fast-forwards the whole story and increases the sense of rhythm in our bodies as well. Another aspect is the usage of music. In *Lives*, Valda dances in

silence. In *Woman who*, music accompanies the whole sequence of dance. In this respect, music both connects the scenes and conduct the rhythm of emotion throughout the film. Just like the ending of *Lives*, Rainer finalizes the dance scene with photographic movements as if we were looking at a photo album (Figure 4.2.19). Both dance scenes with the ball refer viewer's memory as well and it connects both films subconsciously (Green, 1994).



Figure 4.2.19



Figure 4.2.20

Another visually connecting element that Rainer used both in films and performances is a mattress. Mattress or a bed is an object that is analogous to “*sleep, sex, death and illness*” (Yang, 2007, p.26). In this way, she links dance to film, everyday life to fiction. Her performances “*Parts of Some Sextet*”, “*Stairs*”, “*Act*”, and performances with the Grand Union group contain the mattress as an everyday life object. As a minimalist, the mattress holds a variety of meanings and exists as “*a body supporting device*” (2007, p.26). Because it is a private space object, using it in the public spaces delivers another layer of understanding, which is about exposing the private to the public, and makes it public. For instance, when the mattress appears after the rage scene, the woman's rage continues and even heightened (Figure 4.2.20). The fragments of images incorporate with mattress scene in which four people turn everything upside down. When the mattress is scattered around, she also divided into pieces. Thus it can be said that Rainer uses mattresses for expressing women's emotions. In a sense, the illusory image of perfection is broken, the fundamental problem that she stuck into and want to escape is crashed. Rainer reflects that this is the problem of everyone (2007). “*She' is neither female nor male, or either of them. Reading “Film about a Woman Who..”. is not getting to know about a woman but “she”, “a neuter” who resists being a female or a male.*” (2007, p.29) Film's final scene also refers to the emotional catharsis that she felt; “*She sighs with relief. Now that she knew the truth about her feelings she was free to love him again.*” (Figure 4.2.21)

Considering that, Rainer's first two films are very close to each other, also they are very iconic. Her switch of medium from dance to film transposed fluently both in a visual way and in the narrative. Rainer especially raised questions on the representation of women. She posed questions both to

women and to herself through her filmmaking approach hence she contributed to feminism and the women's film genre. Questions such as;

*“Can the presentation of sexual conflict in the film, or in the presentation of love and jealousy, be revitalized through a studied displacement or dislocation of clichés?... Can specific states of mind... be conveyed... without being attached... to particularities of place, time, person, and relationship? ... Can an audience learn to abandon its narrative expectations? What constitutes unity in the film?”* (Rainer, 1978, as cited from, Green, 1994, p.35)



Figure 4.2.21

She gave voice to women characters to express themselves and understand their relationships, exposed their victim positions, free them from the hook of the male gaze and let us understand that, women are victims because of *“their own expectations no less than those of the opposite sex, or of the prevailing social mores”* (Rainer, as cited from, Kaplan, 1983, p.24). With this awareness in mind, I will shortly elaborate one of her later film, *“Privilege”*.

#### 4.2.3. **“Privilege”**

*“Privilege”* (1990), is both a personal and a political film. Rainer as an artist and filmmaker herself reflect her ideas about unequal racial situations, gender and class-based biases, representation politics, heterosexual norms which are privileged. Her artistic voice deepens the story beyond menopause. Relatedly, her narrative fractionated from her personal life, ongoing public issues while criticizing all by taking a feminist turn. Her focus on the body in terms of sexuality, race, class, and gender, let her portray what is on the surface and underneath (Petrolle, Wexman, 2005). In that sense, *Privilege*, *“uncovers the blind spots”* (2005, p.165). Even though Jenny, the main character is sensitive to sex and gender-based issues, she was not even aware of the problems about race and class. While she tells her story, she also is revealed her own biases through their memories; a

lesbian neighbor Brenda, the Puerto Rican couple Carlos and Digna; a friend from African American origins, in which all of them positioned out of the “*safety net of privilege*” (2005, p.165). In the general context, privilege is the determinant factor for power relationships. Carlos as men of color faces consequences because of his skin color, albeit his gender privileges him over Digna and Brenda in another situation. In other words, “‘*Privilege*’ *self-consciously enacts and explores privilege itself*” (2005 p.167).

In this film, Rainer explained the issue of who has the privilege in which situations, in relation to menopause. She underlines the women’s everyday existence by depicting their private desires while showing what they are facing in the public spaces (Petrolle, Wexman, 2005). She focuses on the biological outcomes of being a woman, through the menopause process. As the main character Jenny says: “*We’ll only be reducing women to their biological processes all over again. Anatomy is destiny. When you’re young they whistle at you, when you’re middle-aged they treat you like a bunch of symptoms and when you’re old they ignore you*” (1990). While she emphasized the subject, she also criticizes the physically constructed images around it that are constituted by the male gaze (2005). She points out that, menopause is political, because ‘*experts*’ who are male, controls the definition of it (Green, 1994). Rainer also interviewed women who experiencing menopause, and they shared their feelings from a personal perspective. The documented footage of male doctors is shown in between these interview scenes, which indicates that what male experts said, becomes absurd. As the lives of women are shown from the perspective of women in a documentary-like approach who face loss in psychological and biological terms, Rainer also points out that the subject of menopause is related to men’s castration complex. The common belief of society is built around this complex, thus when women are not menstruating anymore, the sexual interest of men is lost, and this causes terror for her. “*The loss of power associated with menopause presupposes a belief that women are valuable only while they are fertile, fertility being the only time and form of privilege they enjoy*” (2005, p. 163). In other words, “*the loss and recovery of female selfhood*” is explored in the film to point out the ways in which women are victimized by patriarchy and its institutions (2005, p. 163).

The documentary and fiction structure of the film is incorporated as a unified collage in Rainer’s filmic style. As the narrative is built around social and political divisions on issues of race, class, age, and difference, it is also told in a fragmented way. Rainer uses familiar stylistic forms in terms of usage of the written text on screen, non-diegetic usage of sound, non-synced voiceover, repeating a scene consecutively, characters generally looks and speaks to the camera, using visual juxtapositions, long silences, revealing the backstage and equipment. Also, she was visible in front of the camera and specifically speaks and gazes at us. “*Rainer has attempted to face directly,*

*address intelligently, and embrace her audience specifically as female*” (Green,1994, p.100). In this respect, her storytelling sublimates the female body and speaks about it in a different way while excluding the male gaze. As Mulvey also refers to feminism and experimental film; “*What recurs overall is a constant return to woman, not indeed as a visual image, but as a subject of inquiry, a content which cannot be considered within the aesthetic lines laid down by traditional cinematic practice*” (1989, as cited from, Green, 1994, p.101).



Figure 4.2.22

The central story is situated around the female, middle-aged, white woman Jenny who used to dance and currently teaching. As she entered the menopausal stage in her womanhood, she is speaking with her friend Yvonne Washington in a setting, which is analogous to the psychological therapy room (Figure 4.2.22). As Jenny speaks about her menopause experience, she deliberately shifts her focus to another memory, which reveals her illusionistic perspective on certain issues. Eventually, she identifies herself with the forms of privileges besides patriarchy, such as race, class, and sexual orientation (Petrolle, Wexman, 2005). Meanwhile, her appearance changes according to the subject she is speaking or shots from interviews with another woman appears in between. In that sense, the multi-faceted identity of women becomes visible, and a variety of female voices become hearable. The topics are based on aging, menopause, feminism, and, anarchy. Rainer not only focused on gendered subjects but also articulated the areas of race and class (2005). “*Rainer’s concept of the subject and anticipates the full-scale plunge into the politics of subjectivity and body seen in Privilege*” (2005, p.168). In this respect, Rainer keeps remarking that a privileged one always withholds the power, and people, like Jenny, who are not aware of their own blindness need to face it on their own terms.

While the story is going on, the clinical research, interviews, and statistics provide a documentary-like approach to it. The interviews hold an emotional space and operate as a melodramatic device (Petrolle, Wexman, 2005). Therefore, Rainer underlines the field that is liberated from social roles of hegemony. So that women can be free from the values and roles, and be themselves truly. Instead

of conforming to the male gaze, women can free themselves. Rainer implies that especially after menopause, patriarchal beliefs and norms can be undone by these liberated feelings. The comments around the source of the problem stress that women's biology is not the problem, but the patriarchy is the problem. "When you talk about biology and 'them', you're confusing biology with patriarchy. Just because some men invoke our biology for their own advantage doesn't mean we have to go along with them" (Macdonald, 1995, p.281, as cited from, Petrolle, Wexman, 2005, p.164). As male domination is felt over womanhood, women body is reflected as defective, it is something that needs fixing. Psychoanalyst and gynecologists also support this kind of perception with the statements of menopause is "partial death" or "living decay" (1994, p.103). Thus, one of the messages of the film is; "No. Your body is a battleground. The personal is political. The attitude is wrong" (Green, 1994, p.102). Rainer also underlines that this medical domination and attitude obliged not only women but is also aligned with disabled people, like the deaf people They are similar because the sense of loss is politicized and isolates the 'deficient' people from language and society. Also in society, the perception of people is alienated from these subjects. So that even women became alienated from themselves and their womanhood.

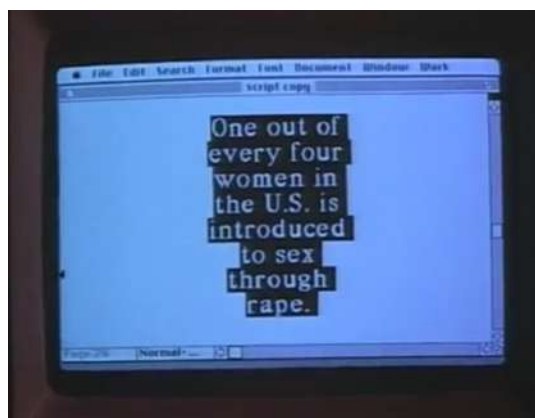


Figure 4.2.23

Rainer's research especially extended through the written text and fragmented narrative (Petrolle, Wexman, 2005). As she did in her previous films, the written text interpolated with dialogue, combined with imagery, or appears on the computer screen as inter-titles (Figure 4.2.23). Green says that all forms of experience whether it is personal or political, sexual, or intellectual are constructed by speech and language (1994). In this respect, Rainer's reference to written text, conversations, extracts from personal writings, and presenting them visually refers to the core aspect of the representation issue of women. Since many subjects of womanhood considered taboo, even among women, talking about it can be revolutionary. I contend that *Privilege*, in this respect is

a discursive film<sup>4</sup>. Rainer also underlined her discourse by using various visual strategies. The colors of the film shift between B&W and color. It goes back and forth between a variety of storylines. Black and white are used with high contrast and evokes the film noir effect (*Figure 4.2.24*). Rainer aims to sharpen the emotional sphere of the film in a melodramatic sense. Additionally, black and white scenes correlate with the dramatic effect of the feeling of going back in time. As a matter of fact, the time perception moves “*chronologically backward*” in the fictional narrative of Jenny's flashbacks (Green, 1994, p.97). Rainer also reveals the background of a scene that reveals the studio setting and film equipment. In this way, she highlights the illusionism of the film in order to unmask the emotional layer that she provided for the narrative (2005). Furthermore, the linear narrative structure is compact and less crowded, unlike *Lives* and *Woman who* (1994).



Figure 4.2.24



Figure 4.2.25



Figure 4.2.26



Figure 4.2.27

Rainer also emphasizes that, in fact, racism is unnoticed under the goodwill of people. For instance, Digna accompanies Jenny during her relationship with an upper-middle-class man. Meanwhile,

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<sup>4</sup> “Discursive” or “intellectual cinema” in which spoken word is significant and creates an argument

Digna directly speaks to us, telling us what is underneath Jenny's attitude about discrimination. Throughout the analysis of Digna, Jenny performs elated moods and reactions to her partner. Digna, in a way, becomes Jenny's conscience. Allegorically, Jenny is both naive about her situation and blind to Digna's existence, which creates a "*symbolic racial invisibility*" (Green, 1994, p.107). In this way, Jenny's ignorance of her own social class perception was revealed, because she was not aware of the existence of Digna and at the same time, she was elated with the relationship that is not satisfying her. When they are in the car, Digna reveals the social disadvantage of Jenny, which creates a contrast of their current image (*Figure 4.2.25*). This sequence especially focuses on how Jenny knew the truth of her relationship was based on her desire to climb the social ladder with Robert and yet couldn't admit it at that time. Also, Jenny's attitude towards Digna underlines that Jenny is unaware of Digna's existence, thus she discriminates against her (*Figure 4.2.26*). Digna asks: "*She didn't even ask herself the question: Must a woman's feelings about herself depend on a man's assessment over the body?*" (1990). When coming back to the therapy session, Jenny admits that: "*I told this whole story hoping to find an answer to that very question; who was that woman who put up such vicious twaddle?*" (1990). I think, this is the moment of realization that, how she was alienated from herself by acknowledging her positioning by a male figure (*Figure 4.2.27*). Right after this resolution, Jenny wants to take place of Yvonne and demands Yvonne to sit on the 'hot seat' that she was sitting in (therapy chair). In this way, Jenny refers to the owner of the story, Yvonne. Jenny also directs to us, as an audience, and invites us to sit on our 'hot seats' and be honest about ourselves. Therefore, we can be honest about ourselves as a woman and shift our perspective towards the womanly issues that are dominated by hegemony. In this way, we can claim our position as a woman and take a stance against patriarchy in our own manner. When this sequence ends, the reception appears where the whole crew chat, speak with each other, drink, and laugh. In doing so, Rainer shares the behind-the-scenes of the narrative, takes us out of the film, and ends the film with a reference to life.



## CONCLUSION

This thesis was a both personal and academic journey for me. As an artist who is dedicated to discovering the scopes of movement in a variety of ways, getting to know Yvonne Rainer in more depth opened up my perception of intellectual and creative studies. When I started reading and researching her life, I realized that each piece connects to the other as if a big, wide web is being created. I aimed to understand her personal journey in order to grasp the core of her artistic approaches.

Her autobiography was the key written work in my research process, especially in the first chapter. The fact that Rainer is a dancer, performer, and director herself, and appears both in front and back of the camera was a distinguishing feature to examine her life and her works. Her dedication to improving her dance technique despite not having a conservatoire education inspired me greatly. In the first chapter, the events and incidents that shaped her during her time as a professional dancer, performer, and choreographer made it clear how and why she decided to transfer to film. Hence, I was able to understand, how her self-reflexive attitude took shape.

In the first chapter, I contextualized the background and contemporary developments of the Avant-garde movement. In this way, I was able to comprehend the core aspects of the movement while understanding its cumulative expansion. Relatedly, the core aspects of Rainer's approach to dance, performance, and film became clearer in terms of understanding, how her work positioned in the Avant-garde movement. Her interest in '*everyday life body*' and her usage of simple elements from everyday life, especially correlated with her choreography and editing techniques. Her research on body and movement, as well as, her filmic style, were intrinsically connected to each other. As she matured in the field of performance, she started to deal with political issues about the representation of women's bodies.

In the second chapter, I elaborated on feminism, the representation of women, and gaze issues in Rainer's films. My focus on Rainer's way of representing women's bodies on stage and screen is extended within the scope of the feminist way of looking at women's bodies that is beyond the male gaze. I explained how Rainer represented a female body and how her female director's gaze shifted the perception about women's bodies. As a female director, she deliberately subverted the male gaze, considered the spectator as a woman while redefining the representation and sexuality of women. In this respect, experimental film was the key point in her approach. With experimental film, she shortened the distance between film and audience, audience and character, and audience, with herself (director). Using these techniques, she built a new relationship with the audience while producing her films in the experimental film genre. Within this genre, she also redefined

melodrama. Melodrama as a gendered genre was a suitable playground for Rainer to implement both technical and content-wise experimentation. Besides the content of the film, she also found a possibility to alter the perception of the audience. This brought me to the third chapter.

In the third chapter, the kinesthetic experience of the audience became my focus, and I researched the phenomenology of the body. I took audial and haptic senses into my focus to explain the variety of sensual stimuli that Rainer used in her films. Moreover, as a dancer and performer, Rainer has a kinesthetic awareness and receptiveness of her body, comparing to the non-dancing director. Thus, her awareness enables her to express a body in a unique way. When she combined her awareness of the body with her directorial approach, she involves the audience in the film in a more bodily way. In this way, her film technique permits the audience to embody the perspective of the performer. Therefore, I portrayed how Rainer's filmic choices affect the involvement of the audience and how she transmits emotions through senses. In order to explain this, I analyzed her filmic devices, how she implemented Brechtian distancing tools and how she combined them all within the narrative.

Lastly, I illustrated all these points; Rainer's self-reflexive approach; her women representations; involvement of the audience through kinesthetic and sensual experience in her film. By analyzing her films "Trio A", "Lives of Performers", "A Film About a Woman Who", "Privilege", I expanded my research with examples and examination of a variety of scenes. Relatedly I believe, I answer my research question, 'How does Yvonne Rainer's identity as a female experimental film-maker and a performer allow for female subjectivities in her film-making?'

In my further studies, the pathway is lighted up with this research. As a movement artist, director, and researcher, I aim to deepen my investigations of representation of the women's bodies on-screen into another layer. Considering the parallel nature of theory and practice, I believe, my studies will flourish in both fields to let me expand my research.

## APPENDIX I

I believe it would be helpful to understand how visual sense was privileged, especially in mainstream Hollywood cinema (Marks, 1999). Deleuze identifies two editing techniques that direct the viewer's mind in different ways. Deleuze says our minds participate with the image even though the image cuts off. The rhythm continues in our inner camera, we complete the gestures. He called this '*the movement image*'. After WWII, Deleuze detects a new form of conception of time in a film that was '*the time image*'. It reflects the actual depiction of time, which can go to the extreme level as Andy Warhol implemented in his eight-hour-long film "*Empire*" (1964) (Sutton, Jones, 2008). In this way, the viewer can experience the passing of time while experiencing the body directly, without interruption. The rise of time-image correlates with the Avant-garde movement as well. With the influence of European cinema, the need for breaking the dominating role of Hollywood on narrative became apparent. The continual editing and narrative structure of Hollywood were broken with the usage of time-image (1999).

Time image, as the continual image of duration, pushes the spectator to put forth their subjectivity in order to complete the image (Marks, 1999). Movement-image creates a virtual unity of time that is spatialized so that we can understand it. However, the time-image is the duration itself, a time for itself (Sutton, Martin-Jones, 2008, p.89). I contend that with time-image filmmaker's manipulation of the image is diminished; therefore, the coded meaning can lose its power as well. Kuleshov's effect can be an example of how viewers' perception is changed by editing, showing two separate sequential shots. In this way, movement-image can direct the perception of the viewer more distinctly than time-image can ever do. Therefore, as Deleuze states, time-image "*is both experienced in the body and invites a direct experience of time*" which enables the bodily perception of the neutral body (Marks, 1999, p.73). He also described the avant-garde world generally uses time-image cinema, by saying that: "*experimental cinema rediscovers the body: both the everyday and the ceremonial body*" (1989,191-92, as cited from Marks, 1999) Thus it can be said that, the everyday body is opened to the cinema by time-image, through experimental film.

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