

WOMEN THROUGH WOMEN:
REPRESENTATION OF, AND IDENTIFICATION AS, WOMEN IN
THE CINEMA OF WOMEN DIRECTORS

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KADIN YÖNETMENLER SİNEMASINDA KADININ TEMSİLİ VE
KADIN SEYİRCİNİN ÖZDEŞLEŞMESİ

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ÖZET

Kadının sinemada temsili her zaman kimi sorunları da beraberinde getirmiştir. Örneğin, kadın seyircinin özdeşleşmek ve dolayısıyla anlatılan hikayenin dışında kalmaması için ne yapması gerektiği. Normalde, erkek seyircinin yaptığı gibi idealize edilmiş bir erkek karakterle –ki seyirci her zaman hikayenin idealize edilmiş karakterine yönelir ve hikayeyi onun yerine geçerek izlemeye koyulur, bütün istek, arzu ve kendisini görmek istediği kişi ve (hikayesine göre) yere yansıtır ve onda kendi idealini yaratır-kadın seyirci de kendisini özdeşleştirebilirdi. Ama özdeşleşmedeki esas konu, özdeşleşilen karakterin hikayenin lokomotif olduğu gerçeğidir. Dolayısıyla, kimi kadın sinema eleştirmenlerinin ve teorisyenlerinin (isim vermek gerekirse; Laura Mulvey, Mary Ann Doane, E. Ann Kaplan, Claire Johnston, Elizabeth Cowie ve Annette Kuhn) ve bu tezin esas olarak sorunsallaştırdığı şey, neden kadın seyircinin kendini özdeşleştireceği idealize edilmiş, ve herhangi bir anlatının lokomotif olan bir kadın karakterin olmayışı, adayların ise hikaye içinde ya öldürülerek ya da olmayacak seçimler yaptırılarak ‘kafeslendikleridir’. Böyle bir anlatımın kodlarını deşifre bizi kadının temsili konusunda ne tür sonuçlara götürür ve eğer, anlatıcı (yönetmen ve/veya senarist) kadınsa, bakışın (the gaze) açısı, yönü ve anlatımın kodu değişebilir mi, ya da belirli değişiklikler, ufak ta olsa yarılmalar görülebilir mi... Bu tez bunlarla ilgilidir.

ABSTRACT

The representation of woman in cinema always brought some problems with it. Namely, the problem of what the female spectator should do in order to identify and therefore not to be left outside of the narration. Normally, like male spectator, female spectator could identify herself with an idealized male character (film spectator always inclines towards to idealized character of the story told on the screen and follows the narration via taking the place of the idealized character and projects all his/her wish, desire and who he/she wants himself/herself to be (and where he/she wants himself/herself to be) onto this idealized character and via, by and on that idealized character, film spectator creates his/her ego ideal). But the fundamental issue in identification is that idealized character is also the locomotive of the narration. Consequently, what some woman film critics and theorists (namely; Laura Mulvey, Mary Ann Doane, E. Ann Kaplan, Claire Johnston, Elizabeth Cowie and Annette Kuhn) and this thesis problematize is that why there are not any female characters whom are locomotives of a narration and therefore idealized in the narration and with whom the female spectator can identify herself and why the nominees are either killed or 'caged' via having make improper choices about the way their lives are going. What the decoding of narration of this kind can lead us to and if narrator (director and/or scriptwriter) is woman, whether the angle and direction of the gaze and the code of the narration can change or whether specific changes or splits can be observed.

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PREFACE

The idea haunts me, that all films I ever watched are products of the existing system and that the art is universal is merely an illusion or at its best -or worst- an idealist notion. The worst because of the fact that it veils over the reality. And what is the reality anyway? Isn't it constructed and reconstructed for the needs and the means of the society every day, or every decade? Isn't it as to be consumed for its status is of being a product? Is ignorance a bliss as the reality is so taken for granted and a fact and to be real that it is concealed from the notice, and yet, so vital and essential that it has a control over our lives with its given assumption, pre-acquiescence (acceptance) that are complied with willingly-or unwillingly since they are embroidered in the unconscious both of the society and the subjects who are subject to the society?

Where does it leave the films? They are merely extensions of the general concealing and hushing up. Are there the ones whom never hushed up and desperately negate the concealing and showing the construction as it is, not the reality but merely a construction?

CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM ABOUT REPRESENTATION

Laura Mulvey in her well-known and often cited 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' essay points out that "image of woman is still tied to her place as bearer of meaning not maker of meaning"¹. It is a way of saying that images of women are not the meaning since they are only vehicles to transport the meaning coded in them to the spectator whom will receive the meaning but without perceiving the who-done-it. Women's images being only a bearer of the meaning (message of the medium) positions women in a passive situation and positions the receiver in the active position. It is the 'meaning' that counts and women are not even in the position to alter and influence it. The question remains is how the 'code' is produced with a conjecture of by whom and for whom it is produced.

With by whom and for whom, I meant to say that not a person or a specific gender, because decoding does not lie in the sexual difference but in representations; decoding is dependant on the represented (or shall I say, coded).

¹ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", *Feminism and Film Theory*, ed. Constance Penley, Routledge, 1988, 58

Representations function as signifiers and make up the film language as essentials of the film narrative. So essential that, they penetrate into the narrative and are taken for granted, to a degree that they “are embedded through the art forming the dominant ideology”². Representations are codes of dominant ideology and decoded by a viewer whom is very much surrounded by it and unconsciously internalized it and thus can decode it, though, the process of internalizing is so general and so rooted that it is a grand possibility that he/she is unaware that they are coded and thus disregards that he/she is decoding them.

The process of internalizing of the spectator’s is psychoanalytically constructed, is embedded and is taken for a fact. Images of women and representation of women in cinema are the reflections of how woman is seen and defined in the society or more generally outside the film narrative. Because of the fact that any film is destined to carry the notions, beliefs, generalizations and prejudices of its creator which is the director (in television however it is often the producers) because he/she is the last judge in making the final decisions in script which is the guideline for the characters and directs the fate of them and a determination of the(ir) representations. And no matter whom is the spectator; male or female, they will receive the representations of women as a reality. Because mirroring of the reality that cinema produces is as Stephen Heath puts it “the representation of ‘reality’ a particular society proposes and assumes”³. Not

² E. Ann Kaplan, “Is the Gaze Male?”, *Feminism and Film*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan, Oxford, 2004, 119

³ Sue Thornham, *Passionate Detachments*, Arnold, 1997, 25

only proposing and assuming, but also presenting the reality and of its representations as ‘natural’ and ‘self-evident’ is present while mirroring that reality in cinema. This applies to representations of women as well, only with, employing patriarchal ideology as the dominant ideology.

Claire Johnston writes that “within a sexist ideology and a male-dominated cinema, woman is presented as what she represents for man”⁴. What she represents for man is her lack of phallus which “is the symbol that sets language going through a recognition of difference”⁵. So that, for she has no means (pun intended), she will never be the part of the language, she will be an outsider, an antithesis and a negative of the language and ultimately and inevitably she will become The OTHER (L’Autre of Lacan, which marks anything outside of the subject, outside the limits of the language, of the ‘I’ which sets the language and is a product of the language and is an entrance ticket to the symbolic order, so to speak. THE OTHER is always loaded with the projection of the inappropriate desires and wishes of the self, of the ‘I’ and since the phallus sets the language and therefore it is not the woman that sets it, man always will project his desires, wishes and incapacities, in short, his lack on to the woman). The woman, thus, will be defined by the man who can set the language and therefore can set the position of the woman for the woman. Since,

⁴ Sue Thornham, *Passionate Attachments*, Arnold, 1997, 28

⁵ E. Ann Kaplan, “Is the Gaze Male?”, *Feminism and Film*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan, Oxford, 2004, 120

“dominant cinema is seen as constructed according to the unconscious patriarchy, which means that film narratives are constituted through a phallogentric language and discourse that parallels the language of the unconscious”⁶,

this ‘setting the position of the woman for the woman’ applies in cinema as well via the representation and via codes accompanying the representation, if not constituting it.

The problem is, since representation and its receiving is done in unconscious level, detachment of the process requires the utmost attention because of the fact that spectator is also present in producing meanings even if or she is not aware of it and most generally he or she is unaware of his or her part and subtly perceives what he or she sees on the screen and transforms it into the ‘reality’. To the extend that:

“With its emphasis on law, logic and rationality, the language of the symbolic order does not easily tolerate borders, boundaries and processes that interweave in complex and various ways. In relation to entry into the symbolic, the mother is represented as an essentially ambiguous figure. She teaches the child through its toilet training to separate itself from all signs of its animal origins, yet she is also associated with the world of nature – and consequently denigrated – because of her reproductive and mothering functions. She teaches the infant to abhor what she herself comes to represent within the signifying practices of the symbolic. An ideology which denigrates woman is also endorsed by woman: patriarchal ideology works in and through woman.”⁷

Woman as spectacle brings and carries around the problem of her being there on screen solely to be looked at, thus, to be the spectacle. This is the passive positioning of woman by the bearer of the look whom is also the ‘bearer of

⁶ E. Ann Kaplan, “Is the Gaze Male?”, *Feminism and Film*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan, Oxford, 2004, 120

⁷ Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, 2005, 164-165

meaning'. What happens is that she is unable to position herself and moreover the spectator is unwilling to alter the passive positioning of the woman as the spectacle; thus, it becomes fixed; it becomes a reality, never to be questioned for it is taken for granted. What the spectator (male or female) sees on the screen as of representation becomes his or her reality, thus, what is seen is approved to be what it is, thus throwing away any other alternative (like its being disapproved), for this approval will not suggest that there is even an alternative; thus closing the door on the counter-cinema which will "alter the course of such narrative conventions; what it could do was to create disturbances and imbalances"⁸.

Cinema produces, reproduces and represents (and maybe in a small account presents) myths about women (thus femininity) and men (thus masculinity). It is in constant reproducing of sexual difference; and as in everything, so much repetition of a 'thesis' without its antithesis sticks as a reality in perception, produces false consciousness, produces an unnoticed memorization, so much that, it is not conceived as a memorized truth but the one and only truth. It is never to be questioned because of the fact that it is to be considered as a fool's errand to do so for it is a fixed and concrete and one and only truth. In analyzing representation, the most dangerous boundary is that the assumptions that are taken for a fact and therefore taken for granted.

⁸ Robin Wood, "Images and Women", *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. Patricia Erens, Indiana University Press, 1990, 343

Stephen Heath's argument, that I quoted earlier, sheds the light on the representation is actually the representation of 'reality' of society's already assuming and proposing of that particular reality, which is only a proof that it is immensely political and works in not mysterious ways but in through unconscious. The premiere of *Marie Antoinette* (Sofia Coppola, 2006) in Cannes Film Festival might be a good example for exploring the idea. *Marie Antoinette* and ultimately Sofia Coppola (both the director and writer of the film) were jeered by the spectator. The cause of this reaction towards the film was that Marie Antoinette (Queen of France before and during the French Revolution) was portrayed in the film as unrealistically and thus Sofia Coppola dared to get her hands of a subject that she is ignorant of and thus besmirching the honor of the French Revolutionists and mucking with them. It is an unfounded argument, basically of the fact that film narration was focused on the Versailles and Marie Antoinette alone and the Revolution was marking the end of the film. So, basically, *Marie Antoinette* dealt with her majesty's rise to the power, her ignorance of the power, her being ignored by the court and by her husband (Louis XVI) Misrepresentation is out of the question, because there were no representations of revolutionists. Of course, one could argue that this lack of representation caused such a strong backlash at the director, but I believe representation of Marie Antoinette pulled the trigger, so to speak.

Marie Antoinette is portrayed by Kirsten Dunst who also portrayed Lux Lisbon in *The Virgin Suicides* (Sofia Coppola, 1999). The choice of casting her as

Marie Antoinette can well be the reason of the backlash and jeer as she is the sole give away of the intention of the director, that she wants to portray Antoinette as a young (she was 14) naïve Austrian girl who found herself surrounded by the all too well players and manipulators in Versailles, whereas, the truth the French spectator at Cannes assumes and proposes is that she was a manipulative Austrian as it was expected for her to be (the marriage of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI was political which is to say two countries at that time interpreted the marriage as a peace settlement, thus, saw Antoinette in the light of this) with a sole purpose as to ruin the empire and pollute the French way of living (she was considered to be promiscuous and thus, it was frightened that she was to seduce everyone as to abandon their ethical way of living). In fact, the only consolation is that she slept around with Count Fersen whom was Swedish, thus, hindering her to pollute young French officers. It is only natural that French spectator can not stand her portrayal of a young naïve girl who is away from her home and alliances (I am eager to add ‘an undesired marriage’ to the list but women in that time seldom had a say in choosing their husbands, including the aristocracy) . The spectator can not tolerate that the film represent Marie Antoinette in a way to easily be identified with (sympathy goes parallel with identification or vice versa), that the text takes side of her, because, they do not and will never ,for, their assuming and proposing of the Marie Antoinette reality sets it(self) as ‘the reality’ . The fact they miss out is that all narratives take sides, and thus includes history as well, for, the history too sets the assumptions of the society and shows whom to identify with and whom to

assign as the OTHER (and occasionally sets the OTHER as the enemy). Marie Antoinette is the OTHER of French society, she was then and she is now, she is the unchangeable OTHER, which is to say, French society constructs its identity contrary to her reflected image and thus identity. Identity is positioned accordingly to the OTHER. This opposing is crucial and centering to the construction of the identity so much that without Marie Antoinette, the identity of French society will not be constructed or not to be constructed as it is now; a different the OTHER should have been found, but it were to be the case, then the construction of the French society would be different.

The representation is the problem of enunciation at the last resort. Enunciation “is the way in which the recipient is addressed or situated”⁹. It operates in two forms; one is *discourse* and the other is *histoire*. *Histoire* is the mode of addressing the recipient (spectator who in fact receives the narration) that is the “narrations of past events, in which the narrator is not foregrounded as a ‘person’: ‘I’ is not enunciated, and events are typically told in an indefinite past tense”¹⁰. This type of addressing is used in *The Virgin Suicides* (Sofia Coppola, 1999) in where the narrator is addressing to the events of some 20 years ago and never addresses to himself as ‘I’, he narrates by using a ‘we’ plastered over his mouth as if in this way it is easier convince the recipients (spectator) of the

⁹Annette Kuhn. *Women’s Pictures: Feminism and Cinema*. London and New York: Verso, 1994, 259

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 48

narration's credibility along with his credibility as the narrator. That is the workings of *histoire*, it

“operates to give the impression that they do not, or at least the enunciator is not a subject but an omniscient impersonal narrating instance, the mouthpiece of some overarching ‘truth’”¹¹.

Histoire gives the narrator a power as if he/she is omniscient and omnipresent as well, because of the fact that, the enunciation of this kind lacks the subjectivity and to show the narrator as of being a subject and thus not making him/her vulnerable.

In *discours*, on the other hand, “every utterance inscribes both a speaker (‘I’) and a hearer (‘you’), so that the ‘person’ is present throughout”¹². *The Piano* (Jane Campion, 1993) uses this kind of enunciation. Ada narrates the story and addresses the recipient (spectator) as ‘you’ and talks about herself as ‘I’; she is the subject and neither omniscient nor omnipresent. Furthermore, the recipient knows more than the narrator because she is the character and the subject as well. The address is not impersonal contrary to the *histoire*.

As Annette Kuhn points out, Tzvetan Todorov

“distinguishes three narrative points within *histoire*: the ‘view from behind’ when the narrator (and the reader) knows more than the characters, the ‘view with’ when narrator-

¹¹ Annette Kuhn. *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema*. London and New York: Verso, 1994, 49

¹² *Ibid.*, 48

reader knows no more and no less than the characters and the ‘view from outside’ when narrator-reader knows less than characters”¹³.

The Virgin Suicides (Sofia Coppola, 1999) falls into the category of ‘view from outside’ but disguises itself as of being a ‘view from behind’. Thus results in the narrator losing its credibility.

The narration and enunciation sets the representation; not in whether it is to be represented or not but as in how it is represented. The text is coded in enunciation, whether it is *histoire* or *discours*, it sets and lays down a point of view for the recipient (spectator) and disguises itself as its being a natural and self-evident point of view. Enunciation gets its own look and gaze as of the spectator’s accepted by the spectator. Be it foregrounds subjectivity in its address (as in *discours*) or be it is impersonal and omniscient in its address along with acquiring the god’s point of view as in pretending as it is omnipresent, enunciation is itself the code of the representation and thus carries the key to the identification. Narrator’s point of view becomes what the spectator identifies with; his/her narration makes the story of his/her and thus makes the story of the spectator because of the fact that he/she as the recipient (spectator) takes the position of the narrator or the character he/she is. What is represented gives way to the formation of the subject, what is not represented becomes the object. Enunciation works as the language, setting ‘I’ (the subject) and ‘you’ (the object) As Annette Kuhn writes, “the subject of cinema is actually formed within the processes of language

¹³ Annette Kuhn. *Women’s Pictures: Feminism and Cinema*. London and New York: Verso, 1994, 49

and representation”¹⁴. Enunciation is the unconscious of the text, the intention that it hides manifest itself by through the slips.

“Unconscious is formed by repressions produced in and through the subject’s relation to language, underpins the claim that the unconscious is structured like a language”¹⁵.

Enunciator (narrator)’s relation to text, what he/she refers to himself/herself is important because it unmask, unveils and decodes the unconscious of the text, the intention of the text and its writer (film and its director’s). The code is the representation and it is coded via the enunciation. The trick is learning the language.

¹⁴ Annette Kuhn. *Women’s Pictures: Feminism and Cinema*. London and New York: Verso, 1994, 43

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 47

CHAPTER II:
WHAT IS REPRESENTED / WHAT IS TO BE IDENTIFIED WITH

Feminist Film Theory and Critics venture and dare to question the nature of the “stereotypical images of an ideologically laden ‘femininity’”¹⁶ thus nature of its being as natural and as it may come. Woman stereotypes such as being a wife, mother, daughter, virgin, ‘whore’, career woman and femme fatale are very much constructed or/and reconstructed along with these stereotypes to be merged being an image of ideal female (young, fashionable, glamorous and etc). With these merges, all we have is subgroups such as; young fashionable wannabe career woman daughter or wife (god forbid) or glamorous housewife (career woman in her league) ending up being a ‘whore’ and this goes on and on. Each group is to be matched with the other group in a process of reconstruction of the stereotypical images of women thus eliminating the representation of real woman.

Objectifying the woman is also in the process since her image is being constructed and reconstructed and most importantly this ‘ideal female’-young, fashionable, glamorous, always in good shape, always in make up (in spite of her

¹⁶ Anneke Smelik, *And The Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory*, Palgrave , 2001, 8

being out of sea or bath) - “proffers an image which many women feel it is important to live up to”¹⁷. This feeling and urgency to live up to causes oppression in determining choices since it sets a standard to reach to and a standard is a main course normalization of what is being created as of ‘ideal’ or as in this case being ‘ideal’. Not only it is an oppression because of the fact that its being setting a standard it is to be expected but also it gives way to representation of women through woman stereotypes to become role models, high peek of ‘the woman’ and, thus, these role models to become a guideline of ‘how to become a woman’ because they define or/and redefine what a woman is by pointing out how a woman is supposed to be and them to be put into practice by the spectator leaving any alternatives behind, omitting the way out and so.

Taking up a position, so to speak, is identification. It verifies the spectator’s side and gives away his or her wishes, dreams and desires. Because of ‘ideal female’ modeling and its being ideal, the process is alike with mirror stage in where the child recognizes himself or herself in the mirror reflection and thus discern his/her own image and define himself/herself as a whole and a separate entity from his/her mother. Mirror Stage is the phase in where the ego comes into being and constituted and by any luck fixed. Self-awareness is achieved at its basics. The one and only ‘I’ is constituted. The borderline between ‘I’ and the OTHER is drawn. Child recognizes himself/herself with his bodily boundaries and

¹⁷ Annette Kuhn, *Women’s Pictures Feminism and Cinema*, Verso, 1994, 5-6

thus acknowledges where his/her body ends and the OTHER's begins. This is an important line in this phase because that is where he/she is separated from his/her mother literally (and by that bodily and in consciousness level) officially and irreversibly. Of course, there can be cases that this separation is not succeeded but that is off-limits of this thesis.

Because of the fact that with mirror stage child is to define himself/herself and thus constructing his/her ego for he/she establishes and gains a sense of the self, one feels safe to assume that he/she takes up his/her positions and verifies his/her side in favor of himself/herself. That is, unfortunately, not the case in here. What the child (male or female) sees in his/her mirror reflection is his/her 'Ideal-I'. In essence, what is seen is not what it is but rather what it should be or to put it right, what it is wanted to have been. Thus, super-ego comes into the picture or rather is reflected in the mirror, so to speak. The reflected Ideal-I is constituted as the super-ego. The child represses his/her own true self and reconstructs himself or herself in his/her reflected image. By doing this, he/she succeeds in: 1) forming his/her unconscious which will follow him/her for the rest of his/her life; 2) he/she has entered into the Symbolic which is to say 'acquisition to language'; 3) his/her primary identification which will be an basis and a prototype for his/her secondary identifications through his/her life and thus it is primary and essential. And if not succeeded, subsequent identifications are to be diminished.

As Lacan puts it;

“We have only to understand the mirror stage as an identification; in the full sense that analysis gives the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image.”¹⁸

The subject (the child here) transforms himself/herself when he/she encounters with his/her image because he /she, whether he/she likes it or not has to take a position, a side, locate himself/herself, clarify his/her allies and whatsoever. And it is identification, the process of location of self, taking a side and sticking to it or else changing the once taken position and sticking to it. The most important thing off all is that fixation (the thing mentioned by using ‘sticking to’), because without it, identification is impossible. And without identification, the child can not exit from the Imaginary to enter the Symbolic thus he/she can not acquire the language and will be an outsider to the language which is the world and life as we know.

As a proof that the child enters the Symbolic, he/she has to say ‘I’ and thus locate himself/herself in the opposite direction of his/her mother and subsequently everyone and everything else. Mother has to become an OTHER. Because if not, the child will be stacked in the Imaginary and will never become a subject because of the fact that he/she will never be able to differentiate himself/herself from his/her mother. If it is not to assume wrongly, Ideal-I is an OTHER also (in a way ego ideal is the OTHER also, in its nature to be desired and self wanting to be

¹⁸Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*. Trans. Alan Sheridan, Routledge, 2003, 2

desired by it). The OTHER is in its most basic definition is the epitome of the desire and a site of the reflection. The subject represses his/her desires and reflects them on the OTHER, thus cutting loose himself/herself from his/her desires.

Desire is by its nature a question of needs and demands and their very thin line of interrelationship and balance. You desire because it is your need and you demand that it is satisfied. Of course, there is catch that it will never be fully satisfied but nevertheless, the demand is never withdrawn. On the contrary, demand is made when need is not met or received. Because of the fact that the lack is constant, the aim of the desire becomes to fulfill it rather than by and with what it is to be fulfilled. Thus, the subject enters into a vicious circle because he/she will never be able to point out his/her object of the desire. Yet, ironically, desire becomes its own object and thus it becomes impossible that it's being fulfilled. As Juliet Mitchell puts it: "In its absence, need changes to demand (articulated), and if unsatisfied or unreciprocated, to desire."¹⁹ The need can be demanded because it can be articulated but the desire can not be articulated. What is not articulated can never be fulfilled because it has no equivalent in language. In other words, signified has no signifier. Moreover, desire becomes desire because the articulated demand is never been fulfilled. So, desire is from its formation is never to be fulfilled, it is by nature that it is never to be fulfilled, its own definition. The thin line is drawn if it is to be demanded or not and mostly it is not demanded but repressed into the unconscious and/or reflected onto the OTHER. I

¹⁹ Juliet Mitchell , *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, Basic Books, 2000, 396

can not demand but the OTHER can, in other words. Or to put it right, I am not the one who demands, it is the OTHER who demands.

“The subject, in coming into being for itself as a desiring subject, does so only in terms of the desire of an other”²⁰. In other words, desire is always the desire of the OTHER. Because the subject does repress that he/she desires and rather than to come clean with it, he/she automatically projects it to an Other. Freud writes that “the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface”²¹. The formation of subject is done through his/her appreciation of the ego; he/she becomes his/her ego at the end of this process (namely known as the mirror stage or mirror phase). From the moment he/she recognizes his/her image reflected on the mirror as his/her own image, ego is constructed, he/she is a subject and the reflected image is an object. The recognition moment is a prerequisite for the identification, if not itself; because, identification is the relationship between the subject and the object. A recognition is therefore the basis for a relationship to be established, and because of the fact that mirror stage is the primary identification it is also a primary (or first) subject and object relation. The child will exercise the same pattern in all his/her identifications through his/her life (which is to say his/her secondary identifications) by modeling after his/her primary identification, that is to say,

²⁰ Elizabeth Cowie , *Representing the Woman: Cinema and Psychoanalysis*, Macmillan Press, 175

²¹ *Ibid.*, 87

his/her object-choices will be modeled after his/her first subject-object relation which brings back us to mirror stage and inevitably to ego ideal or Ideal-I.

Ego ideal or Ideal-I, how to put it, is an epitome of the desire. Subject's desire for himself/herself comes into being in the image of Ideal-I (which is the reflected image of the 'I' or the ego) The subject sees himself/herself in the mirror and eventually takes a liking in his/her own reflection, so much that, he/she assumes his/her reflection as an epitome of perfection, or rather, a peak in the perfection which he/she should reach to, have to model after and eventually make himself/herself loveable by Ideal-I. He/she idealizes his/her own image and ironically enough, while constructing himself/herself as an independent and a whole entity, he/she takes a step as to divide his/her unified self into two parts which will become two different entities by the end of the process (the mirror stage); ego and ego ideal, because of and due to his/her idealizing his/her image reflected in the mirror. Idealized image is thus by solely being idealized, is alienated from the 'I' who should have claimed the reflected image as its own reflected image, though it wants to claim to have it. Because of the fact that the reflected self is not claimed by the ego as its own yet it is the sole reason of its being; its coming into being, to say the least, strangely enough, his/her reflected self becomes his/her love-object, the one that he/she wants to have and ironically enough the one that he/she wants to be. The subject wants to be his/her idealized self because he/she wants to be perfect and to be loved and recognized by his/her ego ideal which is his/her mere reflection in the mirror. So, the subject establishes

an emotional tie with its first object which is the basis for the identification process. Elizabeth Cowie writes that;

“It is identification indeed by which the subject is constituted as a subject but this is a *split* subject, and as split not only between conscious and unconscious but also between different physical agencies within each of these.”²²

In other words, subject's own reflection becomes a different entity because of the fact that it is assumed to be so. It becomes an Other, or to put it more precisely, the OTHER. By and with becoming the OTHER, it also becomes to be desired because, no matter, how often and how strongly it is demanded, it is never to be had by the subject (or ego), nor it is to love the subject; it is to become unattainable.

Ego ideal, because it is constructed and considered to be 'ideal' and for the desire of the subject to be loved by it, is an object for narcissist love. The reflected image is chosen for to be a love object because “narcissistic object-choice is made on the basis of similarity”²³. Narcissist chooses his/her object of desire in his/her image, he/she chooses himself/herself in other words. His/her emotional tie with his/her image [subject's emotional tie with object] is to comprise and encompass the object (his/her image). It is no wonder that Ideal-I becomes the object of desire since it is to be similar of the subject. The narcissist is in love with his/her image, after all. Moreover, he/she wants to possess it (have it, contain it), but, naturally,

²² Elizabeth Cowie , *Representing the Woman: Cinema and Psychoanalysis*, Macmillan Press, 1997, 73

²³ *Ibid.*, 80

he/she will not be able to do so. That should frustrate him/her to the point of desperation, but given the way he/she internalizes his/her love object as to assign it as himself/herself, that seems quite unseemly. Though, the trick is that, he/she does not have a clue that his/her love object is his/her own image because of the fact that meanwhile "the subject loving itself in the form of another person"²⁴; he/she is fascinated by himself/herself as he/she was an OTHER. So, it is more of an introjection rather than being an process of internalizing. The subject introjects his/her reflected image as an OTHER. He/she misrecognizes himself/herself. Ego ideal is misrecognition and nothing else. It is a fabricated OTHER. An OTHER that reflects back what the subject wants to be, what he/she will take a model after; what he/she idealizes for a future reference; a future reference for his/her future identifications. Idealization thus demands the subject to become as perfect as the ego ideal wants the subject to be; in other words, idealization of the reflected image (thus it becoming ego ideal) gives it a way to subject projecting his/her desires to his/her ego ideal as these were the desires of the ego ideal. The desire is the desire of the OTHER. Or the desire of the OTHER is the desire of the ego in the name of the OTHER. The desire is the desire of the subject for the OTHER.

This brings back us to cinematic identification and film-spectator relationship. The spectator, like the child, looks into the mirror, or, in this

²⁴ Juliet Mitchell , *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, Basic Books, 2000, 38

conjecture, looks into the screen, and sees idealized images of the figures. The ones that he/she wants to become, to possess, to own, to have, he/she desires those idealized figures and he/she desires to be desired by them. So, basically, the figures on the screen become the object and the spectator the subject.

Identification is in its basis an interaction between subject and object, and a “central mechanism in the construction of identity”²⁵. As in Otto Fenichel’s definition of identification: “characteristics which were previously *perceived* in an object are acquired by the *perceiver* of them”²⁶. An introjection is in process.

Taking into oneself from the outside and preserving them inside in its basic explanation. For Jean Laplanche and J. –B. Pontalis, “directions of identificatory relations” seem to be twofold; “heteropathic/centripetal” in where “the subject identifies self with other” and “idiopathic/centrifugal” in where “subject identifies with other”. Thus, centripetal identification is introjective for there is an incorporating of the OTHER is present, it is internalizing in fact and centrifugal identification, whereas, is projective because subject identifying the OTHER with self suggest that the subject is not only narcissistic but projects himself/herself onto the “external object”. Internalizing or introjection requires an “external ego ideal”²⁷ in order to be internalized, and because of that, it is very similar to hysterical identification in where subject wants to become what the object (here the OTHER) wants him/her to become (or to be). Hysteric always assumes that

²⁵ Anne Friedberg, “A Denial of Difference: Theories of Cinematic Identification”, Psychoanalysis & Cinema, ed.E. Ann Kaplan, , Routledge, 1990, 36

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 39

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 39

formation of his/her ego is external (remember external ego ideal), he/she looks forward for an approval from the OTHER. And, in the end, he/she is to have a super-ego in the image of the external ego ideal (be it his/her father or mother or whomever he/she idealized and assigned as ego ideal and while doing that internalized and introjected their wishes and desires of his/her own) for he/she (the subject) “is able to take up a position in relation to the Other”²⁸. He/she introjects the position of the OTHER but is in disavowal that it is what he/she wants, that the position is of his/her own, that all of his/her decisions, desires and wishes are of his/her own rather than it being what he/she assumes the OTHER wants from him/her to be for the OTHER; thus, hysteric.

In cinematic identification, spectator identifies with what he/she sees on the screen which is the gaze of the camera and the projector. What the camera sees is what the spectator will see. So, it is the look of the camera that fixes the playground for the spectator identification. Metz calls the identification with the camera as primary cinematic identification. Spectator’s identification with an actor, character or star is the secondary cinematic identification. According to Anne Friedberg, “it is at this level of identification that one contends with the gendering of identification”²⁹. In other words, identification with actor requires a differentiation in gender base, female spectator to identify with female actor, character or star; whereas male spectator to identify with male actor, character, or

²⁸ Elizabeth Cowie , *Representing the Woman: Cinema and Psychoanalysis*, Macmillan Press, 1997, 86

²⁹ Anne Friedberg, “A Denial of Difference: Theories of Cinematic Identification”, *Psychoanalysis & Cinema*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan, , Routledge, 1990, 41

star and these two shall not twine. Film stars are taken to be ego ideals. It is even harder for female spectators to find their ego ideal in the image of female stars because there are a few strong female ego ideals exist (take it as a strong role model and the subject always goes for the strong models) and if any chance they are to be found “their strength is often mitigated or recuperated by their placement in a narrative whose closure disallows such strength”³⁰. So, the so-gender-neutral look of the camera compensates its error by and with narrative. If the female image is too strong, annihilation its power becomes a must. She (the character) gets punished, either by making a choice which will hinder her from her desire and wishes (getting married and saying goodbye to the dream job or a job in general, or marrying the worst kind and giving up on her love-object which was her object-choice as well) or by getting killed as she becomes a ‘fugitive’ at best an ‘outsider of the system’ at worst and becomes the target of everyone across the country (*Thelma & Louise*, Tony Scott, 1991); it is like when a Christian is excommunicated, his/her murder is to become obligatory, is to become required and a binding duty; that is what becomes of strong female role models, they are to be annihilated. The question is what happens when the women takes over behind the camera? Can she make any difference in the gaze, what it fixes, what it annihilates, what it shows, how it shows, with whom it identifies, whether or not it will let female spectator to identify with female characters thus allowing her

³⁰ Anne Friedberg, “A Denial of Difference: Theories of Cinematic Identification”, *Psychoanalysis & Cinema*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan, , Routledge, 1990, 41

taking up a feminine position? Or will she follow the footsteps in order to hinder the dangers of being at an unfamiliar land and as to assure never to tire herself up for to make a new series of footsteps leading to a different direction? Is she willing to open the road to that direction? Or is she stuck?

CHAPTER III: THE GAZE / WOMEN DIRECTORS

The main problematization of feminist film criticism is women spectator taking a feminist position. It is problematic because a feminist position requires an identification with women and 'Ideal-I is a prerequisite for any identification (be it primary identification which is also known as mirror phase or a secondary identification which is all the other remaining and following identifications [thus 'a']) though it is also acknowledged that women are not represented in a way that to be identified with, which is to say, they are not to be idealized. The lack of idealizing the female images brings the alienation of female population of the spectators. Who she will be identified with? Who she will be modeling after? Who she will assign as her 'Ideal-I'? The reconciled sentiment can be read in a critique of Sharon Smith:

“Women, in any fully human form, have almost completely been left out of film... That is, from its beginning they were present, but not in characterizations any self-respecting person could identify with.”³¹

³¹ Christine Gledhill, “Recent Developments in Feminist Criticism”, *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed: Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, 1999, 251

A major disappointment and an underlying anger is what is read through this passage. That is very understandable considering the fact that in order to follow the narration, spectator has to identify with someone in the narration. A narration must address to its audience, because audience is the recipient also and what he/she will be receiving will use what he/she will be identifying with as a vehicle; a vehicle to grasp what is going on the screen as well as to fit himself/herself in it in order to watch it. So, it is only natural for female spectator to expect having a vehicle to receive the narration, something to follow it, and something to get in, if it is not too bald to say so.

The concern of feminist film critics takes a start with female spectator eager to follow the narration but too frustrated to fit herself and her gaze in the experience of being a film spectator (like every spectator) to sacrifice herself and her gaze to take the position of male spectator (unlike other spectator). Rather than how, why it is done is more of an analyzing material. Laura Mulvey, Mary Ann Doane, E. Ann Kaplan, Claire Johnston, Elizabeth Cowie and to a certain extent Annette Kuhn lay down the problem as pointing out that image is woman and spectatorship is voyeuristic in its nature. To say the least, to be a spectator is to have the gaze; to own and to possess it. But, there is a problem as cinematic apparatus fixing the gaze as of the male gaze, so that, what it is to be peeped at is to be the woman. What happens is that female spectator is left to peep at her images which have certain consequences. As in:

“For the female spectator there is a certain over-presence of the image—she is the image. Given the closeness of this relationship, the female spectator’s desire can be described only in terms of a kind of narcissism—the female look demands a becoming. It thus appears to negate the very distance or gap specified by Metz and Burch as the essential precondition for voyeurism.”³²

The spectator is voyeuristic yet when female, she is to become a narcissist because the distance between her as a spectator and her as the image is far too close. If the gaze were to be neutral, this should have been applied to the male spectator too, but it is not. Cinema is, as Annette Kuhn puts it, a “lawless seeing” in where the subject looks at the object without the danger of being detected, looked back and most importantly without being punished by what it is to be looked at. In order to provide these three conditions, it is vital to keep the distance between the object and the subject; “the object of the look is outside and distanced from, the subject” so that there will be “no comeback for the spectator in the form either of a returned look or other response, or of punishment for looking”³³. Female spectator is, thus, in the danger of being detected, looked back and punished by what she is looking at, and if she is not, it is because she takes the position of masculine spectator, so that, she will be able to distance herself from the object which is the image and which is female.

“Masculinity is not the same as maleness”³⁴. While saying that, Annette Kuhn is aware that it is mostly and largely to be constructed and evaluated as the

³² Mary Ann Doane, “Film and the Masquerade Theorizing the Female Spectator”, Issues in Feminist Film Criticism, ed. Patricia Erens, Indiana University Press, 1990, 45

³³ Annette Kuhn, Women’s Pictures Feminism and Cinema, Verso, 1994, 57

³⁴ Annette Kuhn, The Power of The Image Essays on Representation and Sexuality, Routledge, 1994, 31

opposite way. It is no secret or even subtle that male is 'I' and female is 'the OTHER'. She is outside of the language because she is comprehended to be a mystery or an enigma, and thus, can never enter the world of the symbolic; she is signifier of nothing so that she is not signified. The phallus sets the language and for that it is the ultimate signifier of the language, it is indispensable because it is what the language revolves around; it is the foundation of the language, so to speak. The location of women in language, and thus, in the symbolic system in general is that she is the negative of it because she has no phallus, she has no means, she is located as the OTHER and the OTHER is not part of the symbolic (language) because it is what the symbolic can not name. As Adrienne Rich puts it:

“Whatever is unnamed, undepicted in images, whatever is omitted from biography, censored in collections of letters, whatever is misnamed as something else, made difficult-to-come-by, whatever is buried in the memory by the collapse of meaning under an inadequate or lying language—this will become, not merely unspoken, but unspeakable.”³⁵

The OTHER is unspeakable because it is unnamed; it is in the threshold of the symbolic, the borderline between the imaginary and the symbolic. Thus, when the child (female or male) crosses from the imaginary to the symbolic he/she also crosses over the buffer zone of the OTHER or called to be the OTHER. The OTHER is the OTHER because it is whether unnamed or misnamed and both is a sign, if not symptom, that it is not to be controlled or is not something that the

³⁵ B. Ruby Rich, “In the Name of Feminist Film Criticism”, ”, Issues in Feminist Film Criticism, ed. Patricia Erens, Indiana University Press, 1990, 268

power can be exercised upon, because giving a name and defining is a power practice as to take it out of the realms of the REAL (*Le REEL*) and put it in the realms of the symbolic which is language which is world as we know it (language draws the border line of what we know about world and everything we know is inside that border). What symbolic takes is what it keeps. The OTHER is the negative of the language; it has a negating relation with it and it is the sole reason that it is indispensable for/from the language because of the fact that existence of the OTHER depends on the language and vice versa.

The woman in this paradigm is to be the negotiator of the phallus because she reminds of the lack, or worse, the castration itself as in it is not that she will castrate but her existence is that she is the castration. She is the threat to the phallus, therefore to the language, and thus, to the symbolic order. Why? Because she has no phallus. She is the castration herself and a major threat which makes her the OTHER. The irony is that she is not the threat but to be accepted and to be declared to be so makes her a threat. So, it is a problem of pre-acceptance and representation which will have an effect on identification for mis-representation will result in that she will never to be identified with.

In cinematic identification, the camera sets what is to be identified with. Where does this leave the spectator? Is he/she completely passive? Other than choosing the film he/she will be seeing, he/she is not to change his/her primary identification. In his/her secondary identification which contains his/her identification with actor, character and the star, male spectator can with ease

identify himself with a male character; either with protagonist or antagonist, his choices are limitless. Whereas, female spectator will face (pun intended) with difficulties as to whom to identify. Majority of films lack a female protagonist or antagonist: to be a villain takes much more than a character than to be a hero albeit female characters are to be seen in that category without being or having a character: they are the imminent OTHERs. Male protagonist usually does what he does or becomes what he will be because of her/for her as in she wanted him to be/become whatever he becomes or she wants what he does while him becoming what she wants. Does it ring a bell? Yes, he is hysterical. Male protagonist assembles a hysterical identification with female lead or characters (be it his mom, his to-be-girlfriend or both, if available) thus enables male spectator to reassemble that identification both with male protagonist and through him with female antagonist or characters or whatsoever, because he will be taking up the position of the male character and recreate what he saw on the screen not only with trying to look alike with male actor and to act like the male protagonist but also will copy his relation with female characters as well. This is called extra-cinematic identification. Modeling after works as hysterical identification, maybe it is a bit of hysterical also, but identification make up the identity, so they are indispensable experiences.

Female spectator, on the other hand, is left with two options, either she will take up a position of any female characters or she will be forced to identify with male characters. If she identifies with a female character, it is a very high

possibility that the whole experience will be to leave a bad taste in her mouth, so to speak, for her object-choice will be put in a narrative in where she will be punished for reminding the threat of castration by being and appearing as a strong figure both as a characterization and as in being idealized. By being idealized, female character becomes nearer to being a threat as well and narrative shoulders a burden as to minimize it by a closure which suggests that everything has its price, so to speak. A strong female figure pays for it by getting an early retirement or giving up what she earned.

The main aim of identification is to identify in order to become. So, it is naïve to suggest that female spectator has to identify with female character albeit they are weak and not gleaming. She, of course, will pursue her ego ideal albeit its gender. What gives bitterness is that, it is not a necessary step for male spectator to pursue his ego ideal albeit it being a female character, whereas, it is obligatory for a female spectator because, otherwise, she will not be involved in the narrative: identification has a key role in putting the spectator in to the narration, it provides the narrative to be watched and kept up with. If feminist film critics were to be successful in their concern as to provide female spectator taking up a feminist position as in identifying with female characters, then, a boycott had to be in its way since no female spectator would be able to keep up with the narration of any film because no female role model were to be found. Actually, Laura Mulvey suggested something akin to it but her suggestion preserves to be the most marginal suggestion in that department to this day (from 1975).

In its most basic way of expressing, it is to destroy the pleasure by analyzing it, as her subtitle suggests “Destruction of Pleasure as a Political Weapon”³⁶. She structures the cinematic identification and the pleasure of the spectator as of being scopophilia which is “taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze”³⁷, which is to say, objectifying them thus having a control over them and owning the gaze so that never to become an object of the gaze of another, never to be objectified. Scopophilia in its nature is masculine (and which is not the same as being male or man), in other words, active: as in having a ‘controlling and curious gaze’. Controlling as in not to be looked-back-at or to be punished by what is to be looked at. This immunity, though Mulvey does not put it that way, should be examined, analyzed and not most surprisingly be diminished. Mulvey does not quite put the ways as how to but thinks that analyzing it will “make way for a total negation of the ease”³⁸. By ‘ease’, she is meant to point out the spectator’s taking narration, the pleasure it gives and the pleasure the spectator gets with voyeuring what is on the screen by granted. Mulvey deliberately uses ‘he’ when speaking of the spectator and only with this, she causes an unease to grow in her reader as to wonder what happens to ‘she’ and the fact that female representation is the target subject of her paper does not help to reduce the unease. The problem she points to is familiar because it constructs the general theory; female figure/character/whatsoever is there on

³⁶ Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, Feminism and Film Theory, ed. Constance Penley, Routledge, 1988, 58

³⁷ Ibid., 59

³⁸ Ibid., 59

screen as to project male phantasy: she has no meaning and value beside that, as in her being is dependant on her task of representing the desire of men, she does not have a desire, to say the least, she is epitome of male desire; she is a projection of that desire. If that desire were not to be, she would not to be. I am aware of the fact that I am stressing on the desire but it is because of desire being linked to subjectivity, and thus, formation of ego and self. If self is not formed, then, it is not to be expected that desire is to be formed or come to being.

Cinema, with its offered two pleasures (one is scopophilia, the other is identification), assigns its spectator to the active status and reserves active status for its male spectator. The fact that object and subject should be kept in distance from each other in order to achieve voyeuristic pleasure suggests that it omits the objectifying of the voyeur (here, the spectator) as a natural step as in keeping the distance to pleasure. Laura Mulvey suggests that,

“male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like. Hence the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man’s role as the active one of forwarding the story, making things happen. The man controls the film phantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the spectator, transferring it behind the screen to neutralize the extra-diegetic tendencies represented by woman as spectacle. This is made possible through the processes set in motion by structuring the film around a main controlling figure with whom the spectator can identify.”³⁹

If male figure on the screen can not tolerate being objectified, it is because he is the extension of male spectator whom can not tolerate being looked-at; objectified;

³⁹ Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, *Feminism and Film Theory*, ed. Constance Penley, Routledge, 1988, 63

detected; because staying as an anonymous gaze is holding the power as well, with being detected, the tables are to be turned and the risk involves losing the power.

Owning the gaze is holding the power. Male gaze guarantees the female exhibitionism, it assigns female as an exhibitionist, in truth, what it does is to hinder female to own the gaze and to become a subject. Female is the constant and fixed object. It is no wonder that films are addressed to male populace of spectators since the look of the camera intersects and overlaps with the look of the male spectator: they are both objectifying women and gazing at her. Female spectator is in fact in the state of disavowal or, as Mulvey puts it;

“ “masculinization” of the spectator position regardless of the actual sex”⁴⁰ is in practice for the female spectator and she is unaware of the ongoing.

Masculinization lies in taking up the position (identification) and acquiring the point of view which is active. Masculinization is being active because it means owning the gaze and being the subject and never to be the object; never to be looked-at or looked back at; never to be punished for the ‘lawless seeing’, being above and beyond the constrictions of the law because masculine is the law in a sense for <he> is the ‘representative of power’ and ‘main controlling figure’ of the narrative as in being a figure what the narrative revolves around as in the whole narrative depends on it not only as a figure but also as a spectator; ‘maker of the

40 Laura Mulvey, “Afterthoughts on “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” inspired by *Duel in the Sun*”, *Feminism and Film Theory* , ed. Constance Penley, Routledge, 1988, 69

meaning'; has all the advantages and has no disadvantages: that is the immunity of masculine point of view and the gaze.

As Robin Wood articulates, this immunity is not only bound by being a spectator and thus acquiring a masculine gaze but also shows itself in production arena as well:

“The continuing inequality between the sexes can be measured not only in numbers but in terms of the conditions under which women are permitted to make films (and that word “permitted”, deliberately chosen speaks volumes)”.⁴¹

In fact, there are a few female directors in mainstream cinema. The names such as Jane Campion, Sofia Coppola, Sally Potter and Kathryn Bigelow are the ones that come to mind as to be dwelling in and fighting for the box office and humbly acquiring a position in mainstream cinema. If one is to consider Robin Wood's say in this matter, it is a grand chance that they are producing and directing films in this pack of shrewd, so to speak, since it is a problem of financing, getting picked by the producers, and if lucky to be able to reach to this point, being picked up by the spectator will surely require more than luck.

The touch of women authors (directors) is important as they mark the female subjectivity as it is never been marked before (considering the pessimism they construct in theorists such as Laura Mulvey and E. Ann Kaplan, it is more

41 Robin Wood, “Images and Women”, *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. Patricia Erens, Indiana University Press, 1990, 342

than a possibility that male authors (directors) seldom, if not, marked female subjectivity or possibility of females as subjects). Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993) is considered to be a debut for female desire, *jouissance* (a psychoanalysis term for 'pleasure', always associated with the OTHER, and since woman is considered to be the OTHER, it is only natural to link the term with her) and subjectivity. When talking about subjectivity, choice is a given. Not only in the means of making a choice but determining the options for a choice. Since, if the options are given to you, no matter what you choose at the end, it will never be a choice, because you will be bound up with the options that are given to you. That is the main reason I am criticizing the female representation because female figures are given options as to die (as two women being hunted down by the police and given two options as in shot dead by the police and drive off the cliff; it is die-die situation at the last resort; *Thelma & Louise*, Tony Scott, 1991), or to get punished not only in terms of being punished but also self-punishment is in process (as a suicide over a self-pity towards a husband whose ethics is not even better than the wife; *Magnolia*, Peter Thomas Anderson, 1999).

Do women directors take consider giving better options? I would say they evade giving any options so its being better or worse is open to discussion. *Holy Smoke* (Jane Campion, 1999) is revolved around the female subjectivity; the choices the female protagonist (Ruth) that she makes; actually one of them (converting to Hinduism) is considered to be very dangerous therefore becomes the cause of her entrapment which lures her to make other choices. Her choice to

settle down in India, in exact words, horrifies her parents and causes them to call upon a counselor for exiting cults (P.J Waters). The problem, though it is not considered to be by other characters, is that Ruth does not want to exit. “We want to be sure you’re on the right track”, says one of her brothers trying to persuade her to get into the three-days of decoding or as P.J suggests “breaking down”. The procedure laid bare at the table is that she will be brought to her senses by being broken down; she will feel guilty, ashamed of what she had done and eventually come around. The procedure and its being stated so expressly, as in detailed, is most alarming because of its being blatantly misogynist, and the fact that her parent’s “dare” as to detain their daughter whom is of age does not help the matter either since they are not disdaining their of age gay son. It becomes a problem that Ruth dares to take the matters in her own hands and gets to be an authority over her life which as it seems a dangerous step that she took since they are more than eager to block and inhibit it even if it requires to cage her.

More than a disapproval, there is a hate as it articulates itself in one of Ruth’s brother’s “You’ve met your match in him, girlie. He’ll sort you out” speech. She, whatever the means of that are, needs a sorting out and she will be sorted out. She needs to be fixed as if she is broken. She needs to be reprogrammed. Which reminds me of *The Stepford Wives* (Bryan Forbes, 1975); a film about a town in where women are to be killed off and to be altered by their identical robots which are programmed and reprogrammed until the husband of the murdered woman is satisfied with the outcome. Ruth’s situation is similar as

she is to be reprogrammed based on her parent's expectations of her and the reprogramming will continue or will be over on their demand. Her will is questioned but never to be taken seriously or it is not been taken for a fact that she has one. It is acted as though she is flawed so that her will should also be flawed. It is suggested in film by her mother that the only way she ended up like this (being a Hindu) is that she is manipulated to be so. That is to say that being a Hindu is not and more importantly can never be Ruth's own choice. She must have been pushed into it or even been threatened. I personally like Miriam's (Ruth's mother) exclamation that she may even be drugged because it suggests that Ruth is not herself and her choices are not resulted of her will but merely are manifestations of a delusion of will. Ruth is delusional in her faith, and moreover, she is naïve to believe that the newly-acquired faith of hers is her way out of her past and a beginning in her newly-found searching for the truth mood and state of mind. That is what her parents and P.J thinks of her.

Campion, being the writer of the script as well of director of the film, does not trap herself in over-statements and sentiments while digging the subject of getting caged and the struggle which follows it for as Dana Polan suggests, "films of woman's desire can easily tip over into a cinema of melodrama and madness"⁴². Ruth's desire to be free and *jouissance* following causes her to be entrapped. Though, Ruth becomes a little bit over the edge, she succeeds to keep her cool which in her status, or the status she finds herself in, I should have said, is indeed

⁴² Dana Polan, Jane Campion, BFI Publishing, 2001, 34

an accomplishment. Along with coming to the edge yet not crossing it, Ruth causes and makes P.J cross the edge; thus, after three days of reprogramming and breaking down Ruth program, in fact, she breaks down and ultimately reprograms him. From the moment P.J states that she should denounce Hinduism (though he never refers it by its name, in fact, he calls Hinduism as “it”, “the things”, “the staff” and so on for Hinduism and India is the OTHER) because women in India are treated poorly and she should as a woman live in Australia for she will be comfortable, free and safe in there (‘here’ in film’s narrative), Ruth’s “at least they’re more honest in their hatred of women” reply marks the beginning of battle of sexes between them. *Holy Smoke* is a screwball (a subgenre of romantic comedy which deals with the battle of sexes) which is “about scene-to-scene shifts of power, momentary victories of both sexes in their continuing battle of love”⁴³. In fact, as it turns out, P.J and Ruth are equally strong-willed and competitive, they fight with effective words, and stunning and bewildering replies; neither of them steps back or avoids a comeback; they never surrender.

As I mentioned earlier, neither P.J nor Ruth’s family refers to India or Hinduism by their names. India is “exotic” yet “dirty” and Hinduism is a “cult”, and sari is “sheet”. It is an important detail because “the act of misnaming functions not as an error, but as a strategy of the patriarchy”⁴⁴ and since the misnaming of anything related to India is made by patriarchal figures such as P.J

⁴³ Dana Polan, Jane Campion, BFI Publishing, 2001, 151

⁴⁴ B. Ruby Rich, “In the Name of Feminist Film Criticism”, *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. Patricia Erens, Indiana University Press, 1990, 273

and the father, the film narrative ridiculing both of them speaks volumes of its intent and the intention of the author (director). Campion sets a perfect balance as to hinder to position herself as arguing with or cussing to patriarchy and all the candidates of the name of the father; as of sons, the father, P.J and other male figures. Campion's decision to narrate in screwball speaks volumes for her side, gaze and intent, that she sees the flaws on both sexes and that both are equal as in love, hate, power and will. Ruth is a strong feminine figure and yet P.J is not castrated, so to speak. Even, at the end, when P.J puts a red dress and a red lipstick, he is not castrated or disempowered, in fact, he is disempowered when he hits Ruth and runs after her to the point of getting unconscious. Ruth's putting a red dress and a red lipstick on P.J can be read as a last straw in screwballs since, "screwballs heroines are strong-willed, clever figures who frequently push men into a position of emasculation or feminization"⁴⁵.

Last straw, not because it marks the end of battle of sexes (in fact, as the ending suggests that through their letters, they continue on their battle) but because it ultimately causes a lack of comeback from P.J for he is stunned and bewildered at his situation; he becomes a transvestite: neither a woman not a man. He becomes speechless because he is encountered the OTHER in himself. He became the OTHER. Thus deprogrammed and reprogrammed himself as he was taming the OTHER (Ruth), exorcising the OTHER out of Ruth is more like it.

⁴⁵ Dana Polan, *Jane Campion*, BFI Publishing, 2001, 152

The year of 1999 marked a career start of Sofia Coppola as she made her directorial debut with the adaptation of Jeffrey Eugenides's acclaimed novel; *The Virgin Suicides*. Sofia Coppola, both the writer and director of the film, focused on the five teenager sisters and their parents and as Eugenides's DVD Commentary suggests she created characters out of shadows, as it were. Eugenides's novel does not point out the parents (Mr. and Mrs. Lisbon) as characters to be identified with. Of course, it does not draw the five sisters as characters neither because the novel as the film is a 3rd person narrative.

The thing about 3rd person narration is that, it creates an illusion as of reality of the events taking place as well as stabilizing the gaze and point of the view of the narrator as of being the truth. The girls are the OTHERs of that particular 1970's Michigan community because they are enigmas and mysterious creatures (creatures is an operative term used to describe the girls by the residents of the neighborhood mostly with the adjective of beautiful) living in that house of Lisbon's that no one had managed to set foot into. It is as if the mansion is haunted or something. It is not clear why the Lisbon family never entertains any guests and entertain themselves while on it. They are the imminent OTHERs, nobody touches them but everyone points them. Jeffrey Eugenides describes the film and the book in *The Virgin Suicides* DVD as this; "It's a lot about voyeurism and memory and the sort of obsessional love when you're 13 or 14". I will add that it is the memory of voyeurism and how it is addictive. The boys, as it seems due to the voice-over, are still debating of the demise of the girls (they all suicide) and the chain of

events which is how the four of them (one of them commits suicide earlier) managed to suicide while the boys were in living room talking to Lux (portrayed by Kristen Dunst who is, by coincidence, is 14 like Marie Antoinette whom she also portrayed in the second film by Sofia Coppola), the only concern of the boys after some twenty years later is that whom died first, but, as it seems, they agree on Lux suicides after her sisters and is the last to go.

The book is on the verge of being a misogynistic and as Jeffrey Eugenides's say is anything to go by, the book was considered to be misogynistic when it came out. Though, the writer defends himself as of his sympathy being with the girls, the options that were served for the girls; such as, suicide or a life overprotected (which is of course just an excuse) as in caged and in a way entrapped in the house suggests that whichever option they had chosen, it would be better only from the worst (if not, lesser of two evils). The attitude towards the girls via the residents (the writer's intent can always be read how he/she interacts characters with each other and through one of the character's reaction or unreaction towards another) is not helping either. For example; the mother of one of the boys whom is a minor character of the film, and as the rest of the characters is obsessed with the Lisbon girls, says after the youngest of them killed herself that; "those girls", she refers to the ones left behind, "have a bright future ahead of them". "The other one", she refers to the youngest who killed herself, "was just gonna end up a kook". It is a perfect example of alienating and assigning the alienated as the OTHER. The way it is done is curious (it is a figure of speech

since it is not, because of the fact that, it gives a guideline as to the intention of the author and the way he sees the character). Assigning as the OTHER is done through the constant spying on the girls via the telescope used to peep at the girls by the boys whom one of them is the narrator but the trick is he uses 'we' instead of 'I' and it becomes as if all the boys are the narrators. So that, the Lisbon girls are to be objectified, and their chance of being the subjects are to be diminished; they became passive figures and it is not their story anymore.

The same objectifying through peeing at is done in *Strange Days* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1995). The strange coincidence is that both *The Virgin Suicides* and *Strange Days* are penned by male authors (Jeffrey Eugenides and James Cameron, respectively). *Strange Days* is also an obsessional love story and uses SQUID (Superconducting Quantum Interference Device) for the voyeuristic purposes. The difference between the telescope and SQUID is that the telescope makes the far the nearer, whereas, SQUID makes the nonexistence or inexperienced as of being experienced and a reality for a time being. SQUID is the dream of every voyeur, in a sense, it provide and ensure the *jouissance* to have a longer lifespan. *The Virgin Suicides* has an anonymous narrator (since its enunciation is *histoire*) so, the voyeur is anonymous, *Strange Days*, on the other hand, has a voyeur (Lenny) whom has turned voyeurism into a business; he sells SQUID.

Along with selling and making money, Lenny has an obsession about SQUID itself; he watches the SQUIDs of his clients and exchanges them with other clients. He specially likes to rewatch (or as they call it in the film: boot) his

SQUID of Faith's (his ex-girlfriend). The *jouissance* of Lenny lies in his desire to be desired by Faith. She becomes the OTHER of whom is desired by the self (subject) and whose desire for the self (subject) is desired by the self (subject). I constantly add 'subject' to the 'self' because self is the subject and the OTHER is objectified via by being desired; is in a passive situation by being desired, though, it never becomes totally the object because the act of desiring is expected from it. Lenny is the subject; it is his gaze that constructs the image of Faith for the spectator (ironically it is his point of view and look and gaze which constructs Faith which will be diminished by the end of the film) providing the objectifying of her, also, there is a fact that she looks mysterious and enigmatic because that is what Lenny sees her to be; as E. Ann Kaplan argues, "cinematic apparatus is constructed by men for a male spectator"⁴⁶. Lenny constructs the cinematic apparatus (SQUID) and sells it to male clients. I do not have to even try hard for the analogy.

The turning point of *Strange Days* is that Faith (the OTHER) though she is objectified; it turns out to be that she desires to be desired through the eyes of Lenny (SQUID; cinematic apparatus; the gaze) so in a sense she becomes the subject for a minute, but given the fact that the only female character the spectator identifies with (strong female figure) up to that moment is Mace whom is very much represents the female spectator who takes up the position of male character

⁴⁶ E. Ann Kaplan, "Is the Gaze Male?", *Feminism and Film*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (Oxford, 2004), 122

as Mace is the bodily presence of masculinization though she is the central female protagonist (Faith is the antagonist; the OTHER), Faith and her desire is to be punished. As Laura Mulvey puts it:

“a woman central protagonist is shown to be unable to achieve a stable sexual identity, torn between the deep blue sea of passive femininity and the devil of regressive masculinity”⁴⁷.

Mace is torn between being saved and to save. Faith refuses to be saved and because the spectator sees and knows her through the gaze and look of Lenny, it feels like she is underestimating the danger she is in. Ironically enough and maybe that is the touch of a woman director, it turns out that Lenny is overestimating his knowledge and control over the things he ‘sees’ he is not omniscience about SQUID as he wants, and most importantly, wants the spectator to believe in. Enunciator turns out to be an unreliable source.

Strange Days and *The Virgin Suicides* are similar in their punishments of the women; Faith pays for her *jouissance* by getting arrested and the Lisbon girls are forced by the narrative to choose between a life imprisoned (overprotective family) and suicide. The options the Lisbon girls face surfaces after the night Lux Lisbon loses her virginity; they are taken off the school and become prisoners; I have to add that the girls did not have much of a social life before either. *The Virgin Suicides* too punishes the woman because of her *jouissance*.

⁴⁷ Laura Mulvey, “Afterthoughts on “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” inspired by *Duel in the Sun*”, *Feminism and Film Theory*, ed. Constance Penley, Routledge, 1988, 70

The punishment for the desire and to be desired manifests itself in another novel adaptation which is written, what a surprise, by a male writer: Henry James. Jane Campion adapted *The Portrait of a Lady* in 1996. The film has a Gothic narrative which “is about a woman’s powerlessness—with her discovering power only at the very end or remaining in powerlessness and needing a man to save her”.⁴⁸ Isabel Archer, a strong-willed young woman falls in love, gets married (both with Osmond) and pays for her mistake for rejoicing in her *jouissance*. She loses all her fortune to her husband (as what is expected in those years-1870s) and can not leave her because if she leaves, what she will become with nowhere to go and nothing in her possession. *The Portrait of a Lady* is an entrapment story. Dana Polan quotes William E. Shriver in her book: “Shriver asserts that Isabel is, in fact, not so much seduced by Osmond as pushed towards him by a world of women as the really decisive community behind a woman’s choices”. In fact, it is Madame Merle (Osmond’s sister and the mother of his daughter) who pushes Isabel in Osmond’s way, decisively so, and she turns out to be deceptive rather than Osmond himself, which is of course an important detail, and perhaps is not a detail either. Madame Merle ruins Isabel at the end which is a perfect example of the patriarch put into practice via the woman. As I quoted earlier: “an ideology which denigrates woman is also endorsed by woman: patriarchal ideology works in and through woman”⁴⁹.

⁴⁸ Dana Polan, *Jane Campion*, BFI Publishing, 2001, 151

⁴⁹ Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, 2005, 165

Yes (Sally Potter, 2004) is perhaps the only example in which an equality is being constructed without the punishment of woman. The film never depicts the names of the man and the woman. She is an Irish living in London with her husband whom is English. He is an immigrant, of Arabic descent from Lebanon. They met at a restaurant where he works. Unavoidably, they begin an affair. Meanwhile, they are busy with debates over the nature of identity and where they stand; she with her husband and her friend; he with his co-workers. *Yes* is centered on the identity and lays down both its male and female leads as of being the OTHER.

The film is very successful with its setting of the characters complete with their backgrounds and origins, because it gives way to a misdirection of the spectator to assume the woman as to be the subject (as in holding the gaze and the look) for she is introduced as a doctor and the man as a cook and a waiter. The professional hierarchy places the woman on top (no pun intended). The man is the OTHER, and the woman is the subject, this is her story, she is at the center of the narrative. As the film and narration progresses the spectator begins to suspect that he/she may be misdirected as to believe that the man is the OTHER and the object as the woman is being objectified as she starts to play the conventional I-am-to-be-saved-so-save-me persona. She becomes predictable modeling of the Gothic woman. Though, the film narrative never becomes of Gothic narration.

I want to add something about film narration. Enunciator is the cleaning woman of the female lead, and she enunciates as the third person, she does not

place herself neither out of the frame, nor as the subject. The film's narrative is *discours* rather than being *histoire*. She is neither omniscient nor omnipotent, but she knows well what she sees which is the dirt is and how it is impossible to get rid of it completely there is a certain analogy with the getting rid of the dirt and how it stays no matter how with the ongoing love and passion between the female lead and male lead whom the spectator never knows by their names. Along with the analogy which seems unimportant and underrated for it is never to be quite cleared up what that talk signifies, but maybe that is the because of its never to be cleared off, so to speak.

Unnaming of the characters is actually a sign that we as the spectator are to be encountered with the OTHER. Both she and he, regardless of the role changes of being the OTHER and the subject, respectively, and irrespectively, are the enigmas of the British society. They are outside of the language and maybe that is because they are out of the enunciation of the enunciator (narrator) that is the reason, perhaps, that she never mentions the female lead and the male lead, because of the fact that they remain outside of the symbolic order. After all, they seem to be there for the negating purposes, they, simply, by being, negate the society and its members: not-British and not-Western; Irish woman and man from Lebanon, respectively. They negate the system to a degree that, they are considered to be threats. Of course, Irish woman's threat has been lessened to a degree that she is a joke to her husband (whom is English by the way); the husband is very successful as to annihilate her threat over him by arguing that she

is not even Irish because she grew in America, like her being Irish is relevant of her being up brought in Ireland or Belfast as this is the prerequisite of being an Irish. The husband considers it his right as to be the authority to decide whether she is Irish or not, he thinks he can assign her to any identity of his choosing (misnaming is a tool of misdirection and control of patriarchy, naming is also a control mechanism).

The casting of the husband, however, is too blatant that to be considered as a coincidence. Sam Neill portrays the husband in *Yes* (Sally Potter, 2004) whom also portrayed the husband of Ada in *The Piano* (Jane Campion, 1993). Ada is the OTHER too, because she is blatantly outside of the symbolic; she does not speak. Though, Ada does not speak of her own choosing, her husband (Stewart) misnames her as a deaf and considers her to be brain-damaged, whereas his mother or older-sister whom is the perfect vehicle for the name of the father (a Lacan term for the general patriarchy) as she endorses the misnaming of Ada and add her misnames as her being mute and violant, thus patriarchal ideology of misnaming in order to control works in and through woman; Ada's daughter is also an example of this endorsement since she is the one who reports Ada's affair with Baines to Stewart and is the cause of her mother's mutilation. Stewart axes Ada's finger and it works as a castration because Ada's phallus is her piano; her one and only bond with the symbolic order. Her piano sets the language and thus becomes the phallus. The punishment of axing off Ada's finger is her outing from

the language, she becomes the OTHER and more importantly an object because it is her decision not to speak but it is not her choosing of being castrated.

Yes, in this frame of mind, is more of an advocator of freedom since the woman is not to be punished. She leaves Britain in a state of mind that life is too short and that she has to live the life in the direction of her wants and desires. That is of course a direction she gives after her aunt passes away. The man from Lebanon meanwhile, is dismissed from his job while in a heated argument with his co-workers as they suggest and argue that the west has lot to teach to the east, whereas he argues that the west needs to come to its senses and get a grip about the reality. He gets a wrongly dismissal for he is dismissed because he dared to argue against them, and thus, departed from England, back to Lebanon to his former job of being a doctor (the end of professional hierarchy) . She goes to Cuba because life is short, sends him tickets, and at the end, he is materialized in her hotel room, as in, his journey is never shown.

The suggestion of *Yes* that Cuba is a secluded place for the OTHER is debatable and an endorsement of them being the OTHERs of British society. The film suggest that they found their matches in Cuba-the only communist country in the world and the negation of the world order, outside the symbolic order; having no consulate building, therefore no representative in the rest of the world, Cuba is never to represented, has not a signified and in the realms of *Le Reel*. Sally Potter suggests that Cuba is a heaven because it is never to be articulated, outside the system, and haven for the OTHERs; the Irish woman and the man from Lebanon

(although he is named to be an Arab, it can be a misnaming because he never defines himself as an Arab).

Women directors try to place the woman as the subject via assigning her as the self, her gaze and look becomes not only important but also vital, narration becomes her enunciation, she becomes the enunciator, she is subjective and personal, she never plays the omnipresent and omniscient and hinders the man to play the omniscient as well. Women directors's narration lets the female spectator to take the position of the female characters, they are strong role models.

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