

**T.C.
BAHÇEŞEHİR ÜNİVERSİTESİ**

**THE NOCTURNAL FLÂNEUSE:
FEMALE SELF-DISCOVERY NARRATIVES IN
CONTEMPORARY CINEMA**

PH. D. THESIS

FUNDA KAYA

İSTANBUL, 2021

**T.C.
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**THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
CINEMA AND MEDIA RESEARCH Ph.D. PROGRAM**

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Thesis Supervisor: ASSIST. PROF. ELENİ VARMAZI

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We hereby recommend that the dissertation prepared under our supervision by **Funda KAYA** entitled "**The Nocturnal Flaneuse: Female Self-Discovery Narratives in Contemporary Cinema**" be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Cinema and Media Research

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Funda Kaya

ÖZET

GECE FLANÖZÜ: YAKIN DÖNEM SİNEMADA KENDİNİ KEŞFEDEN KADIN HİKAYELERİ

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Bu araştırma, yakın dönem sinemada geceleri şehirlerde hareket halinde olan kadın karakterlerin izini sürmektedir. “Gece flanözü” konseptini analitik bir araç olarak kullanan bu çalışma, toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin sınırlarını ve limitlerini araştırmakta ve seçilmiş kadın kahramanların ana akım kültürel temsilleri aşan bütünsel deneyimler sunduklarını iddia etmektedir. Bu tartışmaya zemin olması için sırasıyla kentsel mekân, gece ve toplumsal cinsiyet konuları üzerine literatür taraması yapılmıştır. Kentsel mekâna dair dinamikler, mekânın üretimi ve mekânın kendi içindeki sosyal dinamikleri etkileyen bir kuvvet olduğu iddiasıyla örnek filmler üzerinden tartışılmıştır. Ardından, geceye özgün olan özellikler tartışılmış ve gecenin aktivitelerinin, ritminin ve enerjisinin gündüzden farklı olduğu gecenin ön planda olduğu filmler üzerinden tartışılmıştır. Son olarak, kadın öznelliği ve özgünlüğü, hareket halindeki kadın karakterlerin kimlikleri ve kadın cinselliği üzerine kurulan söylemleri ön plana çıkaran filmler üzerinden tartışılmıştır. Araştırmanın son bölümünde, üç yakın dönem film *Derinin Altında* (Glazer, 2013), *Gece Yarısı Sokakta Tek Başına Bir Kız* (Amirpour, 2014) ve *Victoria* (Schipper, 2015), metinsel analiz yöntemiyle çözümlenmiş, bu filmlerde mekânın kurulumuna, zaman deneyimine ve toplumsal cinsiyet etrafında kurulan söylemlere sinemaya özgün araçlarla nasıl biçim verildiği incelenmiştir. Araştırma boyunca mümkün kılınan eylemler, potansiyeller ve sınırlar; seçilen zaman-mekânda irdelenmiş ve toplumsal cinsiyeti saran söylemlerle ilişkilendirilmiştir. İkili karşıtlık üzerine kurulu toplumsal cinsiyet kalıplarının belirsiz, arada kalmış ve karmaşık kadın karakterler yaratılarak kırıldığı ve erkek egemen bir alanda yabancılaşmış, mesafeli, saldırgan veya naif perspektifler kurularak anlatı kalıplarının sınırlarının zorlandığı sonuçlarına varılmıştır. Ayrıca “gece flanözü” karakterlerinin sinema diline ait araçlarla iç dünyalarının aktarılması, kadın ana karakterlerin eleştirel perspektiflerinin de yansıtılmasını sağlamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Flanöz, Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Kentsel Mekân, Gece, Yakın Dönem Sinema

ABSTRACT

THE NOCTURNAL FLÂNEUSE: FEMALE SELF-DISCOVERY NARRATIVES IN CONTEMPORARY CINEMA

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This study traces contemporary mobile female protagonists of cinema in the city at nights. By applying “nocturnal flânerie” as an analytical tool to examine the borders and limits of gender roles, this study argues that the selected female protagonists transgress mainstream cultural patterns by performing embodied experiences. In order to provide a ground for such a discussion, literature on urban space, night and gender are reviewed respectively. The dynamics related to urban space are examined through relevant exemplary films with the argument that space is a production as much as a force in forming societal dynamics in it. Then, the particularity of nighttime is discussed to see how nocturnal activities, rhythm, and energy are customarily different from the diurnal ones, while a selected sample of films are mentioned that privilege the nightly setting for the female characters. Finally, issues regarding female subjectivity and specificity are discussed with films that highlight discourses around female sexuality and identity when mobile. In the final segment, three recent films are elaborated through textual analysis; *Under the Skin* (Glazer, UK, 2013), *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (Amirpour, USA, 2014) and *Victoria* (Schipper, Germany, 2015) to see how issues related to the construction of space, experience of time and discourses around gender are formed through medium specific techniques. Throughout the thesis, the possible actions, potentialities and limits in the selected particular time-space compression, which is the night in the city, are researched and combined with the discourses that surround gender and mobility. It is concluded that all these films open up a space on fixed binary gender roles by creating ambivalent, in-between, complex female protagonists who are willing to discover a key trope; the male dominated spaces with their alienated, disenchanted, occasionally violent or naive perspectives. By portraying the nocturnal flâneuses’ inner worlds via the techniques of the cinematic medium, the female protagonists’ critical perspective from within are also conveyed.

Keywords: *Flâneuse*, Gender, Urban Space, Night, Contemporary Cinema

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1. INTRODUCTION

In January 2013, a 33-year-old American woman was reported missing in Turkey. Sarai Sierra's disappearance immediately gained huge attention in the Turkish media. She was married with two-children, was an amateur photographer and was travelling in Turkey alone. Soon after, her dead body was found in a ditch, her last actions were tracked through CCTVs, while her death left behind many "unanswered" questions. A woman being alone at night in certain neighborhoods, or unaccompanied international travelling were enigmatic, perplexing and confusing situations that required further legitimate explanations. Instead of her brutal killing, media discourses articulated around her sexuality, marriage, children, hobbies, lovers, solitude, mobility, profession(s), or suspicious illegitimate jobs. The event was fictionalized like a crime thriller; deviance was attributed to Sarai herself and her life turned out to be a mysterious puzzle to be solved. Sarai was not the first, nor the last victim, whose body was marked and judged with multiple gendered discourses, male violence and patriarchal gazes. This thesis follows female protagonists of contemporary cinema, whom I call the "nocturnal flâneuses", whose experiences are embodied by the spatial, temporal and gendered dynamics and discourses, like Sarai's.

Historically, women are associated with the private space, home, domesticity, inside, vulnerability, low body temperature, sexuality, body, maternity; basically, with matters perceived to be less political but more natural. Janet Wolff underlines that what is described as modernity includes mostly experiences of men that are grounded on the transformations in the public world, and men's changing mentality in relation to them. Developments in the new social division of labor, factories, bureaucracy, politics and city life were the changing areas in this social and predominantly male world. Women were either excluded or were practically invisible in such social realms (Wolff 1989, p. 3).

With the intensification of the public-private divide in the industrial period, the presence of women in public places caused anxiety that comes along with moralizing and

regulating discourses (Wilson 1992, p. 94). The city has been habitually conceived as a male space, in which women are either repressed or seen as “disobedient marginal presences” (Parsons 2000, p. 2). In the nineteenth century, bourgeois women out in public alone ran all sort of risks of their virtue and reputation. The rise of department stores in the 1850s normalized the appearance of unattended shopping women in public¹ (Friedberg 1994, p. 36). With the large-scale entrance of women into workforce during the First World War, women’s presence in the streets was confirmed (Elkin 2017, pp. 8-9). Anyhow, historically, women have routinely been punished or intimidated for being outside, especially alone at night. Even today, the rape culture and the patriarchal order blame the victims for being at the “wrong” place at a “wrong” time.

The 19th century was the period when the concept of *flâneur* was born. *Flâneur* was firstly used with the male suffix “-eur” in French, already denoting a male personification. The *flâneur* of the 19th century walks aimlessly with random temptations of shops, of a smiling woman across the street, of the next street corner to turn around, or of a distant square (Benjamin 2002, p. 398). Such a purposelessness and randomness marks *flâneur*’s wandering in the urban landscape. Furthermore, the *flâneur* is associated with leisure, crowds, alienation, detachment, observation, walking and strolling. Rather than afraid of, the *flâneur* is fascinated with the city, with its unlimited possibilities, he is open to urban encounters and excited with the dynamic spectacle of the city itself. He is an ambivalent figure both resistant to and seduced by the commercial culture. The *flâneur* seems to have little domestic life and feels at home in his detachment (Solnit 2000, p. 165). The initial 19th century *flâneur* figure had the following characteristics: he is an urban social type; he is mobile not necessarily with an agenda, he is purposeless and tempted, and lastly the *flâneur* looks, enjoys looking without being recognized. He has a gaze upon the public and upon the city, either critical or fascinated.

¹ Friedberg (1994, p. 36) highlights that this development paradoxically linked the women’s empowerment in the social arena with a deeply rooted cultural construction of gender that addresses women as consumers.

Nevertheless, these liberating possibilities of mobility is not equally distributed to both sexes. There is quite a literature² on the absence of the *flâneuse* figure in the 19th century literature, because such a character was rendered impossible by the sexual division of the social spaces of that time (Wolff 1989). It might be argued that this lack or absence is also related to taking the *flâneuse* as simply a female incarnation of the male counterpart (Elkin 2017). I suggest that the concept of *flâneurie* should not be approached as a “given” category (Pollock 1988, p. 77), a “fixed thing” that we force women to fit in, since women’s experience of urban space and mobility are and have always been different than that of men.

First because, just walking out the front door is and was a transgressive act for women on most occasions. The *flâneuse* goes where she is not supposed to, while she simultaneously confronts the burdens of home, belonging, and leaving her safety zone. It is doubtless that urban landscape is far unsafe for women than for men. Second, it is not possible for the *flâneuse* to be invisible, she is seen even if she does not want to. She is not the sole distant “eyes to observe” but instantaneously she is the object of the male gaze. She is devoid of the privilege of a “detached scopic authoritarial” enjoyment, of looking and controlling the space without being looked at (Parsons 2000, pp. 4-5). Therefore, examining *flâneuse*’s particular experience with the city is always different than that of *flâneur*’s. In short, the *flâneuse* simultaneously experiences looking and being looked at, carries the burdens of home, faces risks and dangers attached to nighttime, yet she might drift purposelessly and renovate herself via random urban encounters of the city. Imogen Sara Smith (2020)³ suggest that:

A female pedestrian can be seen, like a cubist figure, from different angles at once: as spectator and spectacle, subject and object, consumer and commodity, free agent and fair game. She trails behind her a history of hard-won female mobility—of foot-binding and hobble skirts, evolving public spaces and behaviors—and its reflected progress in art, literature, and cinema....women walk alone for many different reasons, and the films capture the complicated, dynamic ambivalence of this radical act.

² The discussions of Wolff, Wilson, Gleber, Gluck, Parsons, Solnit, Tester on the matter are summarised in the following sections.

³ Smith, I.S., 2020. Stepping out: On watching women walk, *The Criterion Collection*. 2020. <https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/6960-stepping-out-on-watching-women-walk> , [accessed 29 December 2020].

Here, in this thesis, I research those films that capture the “complicated, dynamic ambivalence of this radical act” in contemporary cinema. The modern 19th century male flâneur figure had been my inspiration to cluster and analyze contemporary films across cultures, which have mobile female protagonists drifting in the urban settings at nights. They take a journey of their own, are tempted by various stimuli of the city at night, are going through profound transformations via their involvement with the city and what the city at nighttime brings. They are open to possibilities that are formed instantly and randomly, while drifting in the cityscape. In this thesis, I follow these characters methodologically and combine them like a bricolage to see how contemporary cinema constructs truths or deconstructs myths on this particular compression of gender, space and time.

Taking gender as construction formed discursively, reiterated performatively (or ritually), shaped and reshaped by cultural contingencies; this thesis aims to examine the discourses that surround female mobility. The locus and central problematic of the research are related to female experiences of urban nightly encounters, and their transformative effects on the very characters. This dissertation tackles the social background concerning women’s presence in the male dominated tropes and asks questions whether it is by itself a transgression, excess or a signification outside the masculine symbolic. Since the term *flânerie* is overloaded with quintessential masculine properties, this research also aims to play with the concept, and is willing to take risks to convert it upside down. I intend to discover the properties specific to the female version of *flânerie* in contemporary cinema. I borrow and use the concept outside its historical context and beyond its quintessential masculine stereotypical boundaries, in order to redefine and appropriate it for all gendered experiences.

One might still ask, why such a masculine concept is seized for discussing female experiences in the first place? Taking a male dominated concept as a reference point runs all sorts of risks such as limiting the research to a kind of complaint list soliciting only “lacks” in the female practices. Here, rather than concentrating on “lacks” I propose to re-appropriate the term to examine the “particularities” inherent to female experiences in the urban nightlife. Rather than starting from a masculine reference

point, or accepting a pejorative otherness for feminine identity, I stand on a point that affirms differences, particularities and specificities that embody female experiences.

Furthermore, I suggest that examining contemporary *flâneuses* extends the limits of the culturally intelligible, deconstructs normalized gendered hierarchies and asymmetries in division of social spaces, plays with boundaries of vision or gaze, and experiments with boundaries of gender norms. As I mentioned, for women, a detached observation of the urban spectacle in solitude is not that possible, and urban encounters reshape their experiences differently. Therefore, I do not approach filmic camera as a detached recording tool wandering in the city that, I suggest, is similar to the male *flâneur*'s touristic, scopic, leisured, authoritatorial gaze. I assume that female gaze upon the city is critical and transgressive by itself that reveal multiple dynamics.

As mentioned, the principal *chronotope* of the research is the night and the city. Bakhtin defines *chronotope* (time-space) as the “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature”. The *chronotope* provides a wholeness in which “time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time” (Bakhtin 1982, p. 84). In a way *choronotope* is not related to different understandings of temporality or spatiality; but rather to different possibilities of human action in a concrete spatio-temporality (Steinby 2013, pp. xx, 116). Here, I look for the possible actions, potentialities and limits in my particular time-space compression, which is the night in the city, while combining it with dynamics of gender and mobility.

Furthermore, rather than choosing popular culture texts, by selecting relatively art-house, festival-circuit films, I intend to show how these films provide additional reflection and criticism to the contemporary patriarchal norms or archetypical representations of gender in film studies. I propose that the nocturnal *flâneuse* characters of contemporary art house cinema reshape the borders of the culturally

intelligible and make “noises” in the “distribution of the sensible”⁴ (Ranciere 2004, 2009) in the postfeminist media culture.

The backlash theorists of postfeminism underline the fact that mainstream postfeminist discourses disregard feminism by positioning it as “unfashionable”, something “*passé*” and therefore not worthy of serious consideration (Gamble 1998, p. 38). If feminism is something in the past, can we comfortably claim that today women enjoy wandering alone at night as free and as secure as their male counterparts? More importantly for the purpose of this research, I wonder how do contemporary filmic texts tackle such an enigmatic theme? Furthermore, rather than focusing on mainstream films, I would like to trace how more critical, art-house, relatively unconventional filmic texts portray such female protagonists. Do they challenge the mainstream postfeminist sensibilities, or reproduce them? How are the themes such as empowerment, individuality, sexual freedom, themes that are acclaimed to be *passé* handled? How solitary mobility functions in the filmic narratives, how is it reflected via filmic tools? How is the mobile female protagonists’ gaze upon the city formally constructed? What kind of discourses are articulated in the filmic texts that shape the female protagonists’ mobility, sexuality or body? The theme isolated for the purpose of this study concerns such research questions in mind, while referring to the selected films, which represent mobile female protagonists.

1.1 BACKGROUND

The concept of *flâneur* is used in literary criticism predominantly, but it had been adapted to film analyses by many scholars as well. In these studies, the concept is taken as a theoretical device to discuss character’s relation to the city. Niazi (2010) works on Jafar Panahi cinema, where he takes camera’s movement as *flânerie* and discusses urban experience in post-revolution Iran cities; Knight (2013) concentrates on Woody Allen films, to demonstrate how urban male identity and city life are joint with the

⁴ Ranciere suggests that the visible and the invisible, and of noise and speech constitutes the *distribution of the sensible*. Politics consists in reconfiguring the distribution of the sensible, to introduce it new subjects and objects, to render visible what had not been, and to make heard as speakers those who had been perceived as mere noisy animals (Ranciere 2009, pp.24-25).

characters' relation to domestic sphere; Mouton (2001) examines Agnès Varda's (1962) *Cléo from 5 to 7* to show how the female character is transformed to a *flâneuse* as a result of her involvement with the city; Nolan (2004) discusses the connections between the noir heroes and the modern subject particularly focusing on the film *Double Indemnity* (Wilder, 1944); Murphy (2006) compares and contrasts two films the *Roman Holiday* (Wyler, 1953) and *Lost in Translation* (Coppola, 2003) where single female protagonists negotiate urban space, which she defines as *flânerie*. Finally, Özgen-Tuncer (2015) works on how urban mobility, which she calls *pedestrian acts*, are reflected by the cinematic medium at various critical turning points of film history (such as in German Neorealism, or in Agnès Varda's films).

Rather than focusing on one film, or one director, or approaching camera as the flâneur that documents the urban landscape; I decided to cluster films thematically on the selected *chronotope* with mobile female protagonists to uncover the complex dynamics in it. A similar approach is made by Julie Grossman (2009) on "femme fatale" characters, by Janice Loreck (2016) on "violent women", and by Lucy Bolton (2011) on "thinking women". These latter two studies thematically combine female characters while focusing on relatively art house films that tour international festivals. Following Dudley Andrew's arguments on art cinema breaking the usual stylistic codes of popular film and encouraging spectators for new readings (Andrew 1984), I also assume that relatively art-house films, not necessarily but most likely, have the capacity to provide more insights on the complexities of human subjects, especially on misfit, transgressive female wanderers of the city.

Much has been said on the femme fatale characters of noir films, from their objectification as spectacle via cinematic apparatus (Mulvey 1975) to their state of symptomatic reflection of societal anxiety (Hirsch 1981). Each are refreshing, here I take inspiration from Grossman's (2009) elaboration of the femme fatale figure in noir films, where she approaches them as a "constructed category" rather than a fixed myth or illusion. The writer suggests that females in noir films are more ambiguous and complex representations beyond the angel-whore or good-bad dichotomy. She points to the fact that female sexuality and power are quickly attached to evilness but is also

related to modern imagination of strong women in culture, and noir films put pressure on cultural binary opposition of gender, while transgressing gender roles and embracing the complexity of human experience (Grossman 2009, pp. 34-36).

Very recently, in her work on *Violent Women in Contemporary Cinema*, Loreck (2016) thematically combines relatively recent art-house films with violent female protagonists; *Antichrist* (von Trier, 2009), *Trouble Every Day* (Denis, 2001), *Baise-moi* (Despentes & Trinh Thi, 2000), *Heavenly Creatures* (Jackson, 1994), *Monster* (Jenkins, 2003) and *The Reader* (Daldry, 2008). Loreck suggests that there are dozens of femme fatales, madwomen and female sadists in a variety of films across cultures, most of which persist on archetypes of global storytelling traditions, and construct women as crueler and more violent than man. But actually, in real life there is a belief that women are not supposed to be violent, and the writer finds these films providing the complexity of violent female subjectivity outside the ideological tropes of specific genres such as horror, noir, action, slasher, rape-and-revenge or exploitation films (Loreck 2016, pp. 4-5). In her examination of violent women, the writer discusses how art and quality cinema, or “cinema of taste” engages with the subversive theme of women’s aggression. These films share a chief organizing rationale: the desire for knowledge of enigmatically portrayed violent women, which is a structuring curiosity in the filmic narrative and dramatic structure (Loreck 2016, pp. 12, 143). Moreover, by showing female bodies engaging in masculine behaviors, these films provide a cinematic experiment, and imaginative demonstration of gender flexibility. Loreck (2016, pp. 144-146) concludes that all these films initiate modes of viewing that challenge the objectifying gaze inscribed by the cinematic apparatus.

On a similar account, but a different track, Bolton (2011) examines what she calls the “thinking women”. Focusing on the films *In the Cut* (Campion, 2003), *Lost in Translation* (Coppola, 2003) and *Morvern Callar* (Ramsay, 2002); Bolton discusses how inner life or consciousness of these characters become the motor of the narrative. The films selected are directed by women directors and all tackle themes like self-affection, inner lives, thoughts, desires, fears and emotions. Bolton uses an Irigarayan framework to discuss female specificity. Rather than a totalizing theory of “woman”, or

positive affirmative representational concerns, Bolton works on how gender specificity, difference, consciousness and inner worlds of characters are reflected in difference to conventional cinema (Bolton 2011, pp. 3-14).

Significant attention has already been given on the representation of women in film studies primarily based on psychoanalytical premises or on the ethos of punishing archetypical deviants within genre conventions. These above-mentioned three works on female characters helped me to legitimize my work on similar grounds. Grosmann's (2009) approach to femme fatale figure as a social construct, a critical tool to examine patriarchy; Loreck's (2016) focus on relatively festival circuit films to see how they engage with the theme of women's violence and aggression; and Bolton's (2011) alignment to issues like gender specificity, difference and self-affection had been useful to locate my work in this tenet. Rather than given, all emphasize female characters' complexity and imply a state of transgression in the patriarchal discourse.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

In most general terms, I started my research inspired by the works of Levi-Strauss' method of bricolage. Levi-Strauss (1966) uses bricolage as a way of actively engaging and bringing together what is "at hand". In a way, foremost, the priority is given to the materials at hand. Instead of starting from a monological, external research method, this qualitative method of bricolage privileges the complexity of the lived world. The bricoleur works on the imminent materials, maps them like a collection wherein each and every item are equally regarded (Denzin and Lincoln, pp. 316-317). I started my research with looking out films that have female protagonists mobile outside alone at night. With the materials at hand, I scattered all the films on my map and made my own collage of clusters that share parallel themes. Some films highlighted existential crises, liberation, sexuality, gendered solidarity, or excessive intoxications and block-outs, while some displayed stalkers, danger, rampage, rape culture, or violence. Rather than a historical approach of enlisting films chronologically, here the materials at hand are bundled based on thematic similarities and differences. Each cluster is thematically

similar in terms of female protagonists' relation to space, or night; but is different from other clusters in terms of emphasizing a particular theme more significantly.

Secondly, I intend to follow nocturnal flâneuses as a method of discovering urban experience, like it was done by the early urban thinkers. Baudelaire's writings on the dandy, flâneur, prostitute; Benjamin's discussions on social types at the margins like the collector, gambler, flâneur; Poe's detectives, or Simmel's stranger all deliberated the societal dynamics connected to the changing urban culture. These figures followed certain "urban characters", with their particular actions or attitudes in order to read the city experience like a text. I tracked my female protagonists too, in order to see which discursive formations or power relations they lead us. I tracked them, in order to read the "city as a text", while they are wandering on the ground with embodied and actualized experiences (de Certeau 2002). In addition, by following "things-in-motion" (Appadurai 1986), I also walked through trajectories, dark corners, power networks, patriarchal gazes and social interactions that surround these female characters. I traced my characters to examine their particular embodied gender experiences constructed by the multilayered dynamics of night and the city.

The film sample is basically composed of festival circuit films shot after the millennium. Repetitions are excluded, while most fitting examples are selected for each cluster. Some early films are also mentioned as significant notable cases. These films, in general, portray profound transformations of female protagonists through involvement with the city at night. For an elaborative analysis of the nocturnal *flâneuse* character, in the forthcoming chapters, I discuss *Elevator to the Gallows* (Malle, 1958), *Cléo from 5 to 7* (Varda, 1962), *Klute* (Pakula, 1971), *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* (Brooks, 1977), *Vagabond* (Varda, 1985), *Variety* (Gordon, 1983), *Thelma & Louise* (Scott, 1992), *The Addiction* (Ferrara, 1995), *Baise-moi* (Despentes & Trinh Thi, 2000), *Chaos* (Serreau, 2001), *La Pianiste* (Haneke, 2001), *Friday Night (Vendredi Soir)* (Denis, 2002), *Morvern Callar* (Ramsay, 2002), *In the Cut* (Campion, 2003), *Irreversible* (*Irréversible*, Noé, 2003), *Head-On* (*Gegen die Wand* Akin, 2004), *Somersault* (Shortland, 2004), *Red Road* (Arnold, 2006), *Only Lovers Left Alive* (Jarmush, 2013), *Gloria* (Lelio, 2013), and *The Unknown Girl* (Dardenne Brothers, 2016). These films

are briefly discussed in the following chapters as being representatives of different aspects in regard to the issues of mobility, gender, night and the city. All of the films have mobile female protagonists, and the films follow their perspectives. I argue that these films provide complex representations on screen on issues regarding gender identity, performativity, transformation, sexual discovery, transgression, cultivation of self-knowledge and desire on a journey of exploring themselves.

For the case analysis, I analyzed three contemporary films in detail. By limiting the sample to contemporary films, I mainly focused on three films that premiered within the past ten years. The films in the final section are *Under the Skin* (Glazer, 2013), *Victoria* (Schipper, 2015) and *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (Amirpour, 2014). The reason for the selection of these three films is because they have longest screening time of female characters who are mobile at night, they are all shot and released during the past ten years and being open to urban space have significant impacts on the characters. These films are exemplary of showing patriarchal discourses imprinted on the characters' bodies and reflect the urban space as a place to be discovered, and yet to be afraid of. They combine issues discussed in the previous chapters on space, time and gender, while reflecting female protagonists' point of views and inner worlds.

In this study, I carried out textual analyses to the selected sample of films. Textual analysis mainly focuses on the texts themselves and filmic texts are formed through various formal elements. I mainly examine the elements of *shyuzet* and style to see how they construct the *fabula*, especially at the scenes that women are alone at night in the urban setting, the scenes they make urban encounters in public spaces and the scenes that portray the city. Based on the formalist premises, in the case analysis section, each film's plot and critical turning points, character motivations and actions, the relationship to space and time are examined to see the underlying narrative structure of the film. Furthermore, issues regarding specific stylistic elements such as lighting, editing, shooting angles, color palette or soundtrack are examined in order to see which filmic tools are appropriated for expressing the nocturnal flâneuses' relationship to the city and the night. Through these formalist premises, the gazes produced by the cinematic medium are considered too.

To sum up, I apply nocturnal *flânerie* as an analytical tool to examine the borders and limits of gender roles in public spaces at night, while arguing that these broken heroines transgress mainstream cultural patterns through showing the complexity of being surrounded by multiple discourses. All these films represent female subjectivities beyond gender binaries by creating ambivalent, in-between, complex female figures who are willing to discover a male dominated key trope with their alienated, disenchanted, occasionally violent or naive perspectives. Strong and weak, dangerous and naive, moody and adventurous, seeking pleasure - finding frustration, they show embodied experiences via involvement with the city and night. These characters are in the midst of the noir life in the city, both fearful and fascinated leave their safety zones, while going through their tests of love during their journey of self-discovery. They are open to randomness of encounters, which have significant transformative effects on them. They are all also damaged characters who are searching for emotional/sexual company. Women's wandering alone at night is a functional enigmatic narrative hook for these films and I am interested in showing their relationship to night and city via the cinematic medium.

1.3 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Firstly, this study contributes to understand women's relationship to urban spatiality and nightly temporality in contemporary cinema. In the films selected; the female protagonists, mainly spend their time outside at night alone in the urban setting, leave behind their safety zones in order to re-create themselves both sexually and existentially, and are drawn to events that are unforeseen at night in the city. I suggest, these films examine the liberating possibilities of mobility; reflect self-discovery and transformation of female sexuality, follow heroines' point of view who go to places that they are not expected to go. The protagonists take emotional and material risks, and discover a male dominated trope, the urban night life. Thematically combining such a matter is very fruitful in understanding the gendered construction of space, to examine how they are reflected, or challenged via filmic tools. Moreover, the research contributes by combining gender studies with contemporary cinema of the margins to see how these films are positioned in the postfeminist media culture.

1.4 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The understanding of time and space is closely related to how we conceptualize reality, self, existence, politics, culture, storytelling; in short how we perceive or react upon the world. Furthermore, the conceptualizations of time and space change historically, are not static and these changes in return impact on how the individuals relate to the world.

Since this research follows female protagonists wandering alone at night in the city, issues related to and intersection of space, night and gender become significant for the literature review of the thesis. The following chapter starts with the literature of the spatial arguing that space is not a passive locus that things happen. Space is both a production, shaped through social processes; and a force that influences, directs or delimits possibilities of actions, and ways of being in the world. Space includes a practiced dynamism. Afterwards, historical roots of gendered associations on private space, domesticity and home are briefly summarized. Next, the gendered dimensions of mobility and flânerie are overviewed. These theoretical discussions are followed by examination of three films; *Elevator to the Gallows*, *Cléo from 5 to 7* and *Vendredi Soir (Friday Night)* in which the female protagonists were at their closest with the modernist flâneur, and their engagement with the city have transformative effects on the characters.

Next, the gendered dimension of urban space is discussed by exemplifying *Chaos* while drawing similarities with a recent film, *The Unknown Girl*, in which female solidarity is constructed across social classes against patriarchal power and the night in the city is the setting of these female characters' encounters. Finally, a review on rape culture is briefly mentioned in connection to the films *Irreversible*, *Thelma and Louise*, and *Baise Moi*, all of which are marked with rape incidents and a general rampage against society. The latter two films also highlight female bond and discourses evolving around female mobility.

Following, in the third chapter, the particularity of nighttime is reviewed. Night does not simply designate a temporal unit when half of the earth is dark, but also is a state of

being with particular sensory requirements and moods for both humans and nocturnal species. Night is historically associated with fear, darkness, evil, danger, lawlessness, dreams, entertainment and sexuality. Night also has its own rhythm, it is a zone that is free of the burdens of the work, it includes reproduction of the body and sleep. It is also associated with the dark side of psyche, revolutions, criminal activities or the uncanny. More than a time zone, the night imposes particular activities, spatial arrangements and norms by itself. The nocturnal might be thought as an alternative to the diurnal as well, where norms superimposed by the society are questioned, transgressed or reshaped.

The night chapter starts with a discussion of Bette Gordon's *Variety*, Andrea Arnold's *Red Road* and Michael Haneke's *La Pianiste*, in which the night becomes the setting for female protagonists to cover under the veil of darkness, wander in the far corners of the city, stalk strangers and find grounds for expressing their unconventional desires. Next, nights of drunken excess are exemplified via Fatih Akin's *Gegen die Wand* and Sebastian Lelio's *Gloria* where both female protagonists experience intoxicated pass-outs alone in the city at night, after which they give new directions to their lives. Finally, female vampires are discussed with two films, Abel Ferrara's *The Addiction* and Jim Jarmush's *Only Lovers Left Alive*; where I suggest, genre conventions are challenged in representing female vampires.

The fourth chapter starts with a brief examination of gender theories on female identity, feminist movements and feminist discussions in film studies. Here Butler's theories on performativity, and construction of gender via discursive formations and Irigaray's notions of sexual difference are briefly overviewed. Two different clusters of films are discussed in relation to gender and mobility. Directed by women filmmakers, the first cluster is composed of young runaways in Varda's *Vagabond*, Lynne Ramsay's *Morvern Callar* and Cate Shortland's *Somersault* all of which say much about the gendered sensitivity of mobility and the discovery of sexuality at a younger age. Later, sexually independent women in city life are elaborated through the examination of three cult films; Alan J. Pakula's *Klute*, Richard Brooks' *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* and Jane Campion's *In the Cut*, in which active sexuality and independence make the characters susceptible to punishment and male anger.

Finally, in the last chapter selected three films; Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin*, Sebastian Schipper's *Victoria* and Ana Lilly Amirpour's *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* are analyzed in detail based on textual premises. Following an alien, a criminal and a vampire; concepts like gaze upon the city, sexual harassments, gendered experience of space and time, crime, underworlds, dark corners, lawlessness, justice, sexuality, empowerment, self-discovery, inner worlds, mimicry, feminine masquerade as well as multiple discourses surrounding the characters while engaging with the city at night are elaborated through the examination of the films' formalist elements.



2. URBAN SPACE, MOBILITY AND THE GENDERED EXPERIENCE OF THE CITY SPACE

2.1 THE PRODUCTION OF SPACES

In *Space, Time and Perversion*, Elizabeth Grosz (1995) highlights that the subject's corporeality gained emphasis in theoretical discussions, especially after the paradigm shift, which suggests that the subject's consciousness or interiority is no longer the foundation of identity. In such debates, the corporeality as matter and form is rethought particularly by the so-called "French feminism" branch, namely by Irigaray and Kristeva. Not only the body itself, but the spatio-temporal locations and the environment of bodies regained prominence. The subject's relation to space and time is no longer thought to be passive, nor space is assumed as an empty receptacle independent of its contents (Grosz 1995, pp. 84, 92). Today, space, time and subjectivity are accepted as dynamic concepts and their interactions require further elaborations. This chapter is particularly interested in the dynamics related to the spatial and its gendered dimensions.

Although mostly imagined as given, natural or passive, actually, social space is always produced. It is critical to acknowledge that space is "both a production, shaped through a diverse range of social processes and human interventions, and a *force* that, in turn, influences, directs and delimits possibilities of action and ways of being in the world" (Wegner 2002, cited in Reus and Usandizaga 2007, p. 19). Space embodies the subjects and their positions, locates and arranges objects, creates hierarchies and shapes possibilities or limits. Therefore, it is analytically helpful to acknowledge the produced nature of space with its particular outcomes on the subjects and objects that it inhabits.

Henri Lefebvre is one of the pioneer theorists who pointed to the social and political consequences of production of spaces. He underlines the fact that through the social character of spaces, certain social roles and relations are assigned to individuals. As a Marxist thinker, rather than production *in* spaces, he emphasizes the production *of*

spaces to which everyday life dynamics are strictly connected. To him, any social or political change cannot succeed if it does not involve a transformation of “lived space” that emerges to supersede the fragmented abstract spaces of contemporary utilitarian culture (Gardiner 2000, p.97).

For Lefebvre (1991, p.26), “*(social) space is a (social) product*”. Though sounds like a tautological claim, here he aims to emphasize how space is integrated to all social relations, how it serves as a tool of thought and action; and how it might become a means of control, of domination and of power. Each member of a society has a particular relationship to his/her social space, which delimits or expands particular levels of competences and performances within that space. Again, Lefebvre emphasizes that social space “incorporates” and unites with social actions of subjects both individually and collectively (Lefebvre 1991, pp. 26-33). In a way, every individual contributes to this dynamic structure of social spaces, and yet is reshaped by their impacts.

Lefebvre also emphasizes the importance and revolutionary potential in everyday life practices. The “spaces of freedom”, bodies that are not deprived of their “rhythms”, “non-instrumentalized plays” in urban space are the terminology he suggests catching the emancipatory potential of every life and breaking with the routinized, commoditized, parceled out, fragmented abstract spaces of the capitalist order (Gardiner 2000, pp. 90-96). For him, the taken for granted can be superseded by the potentials hidden in everyday life and for this, re-appropriating the right to space is absolutely needed.

Following the Marxist thinker Lefebvre, among many, theoreticians such as David Harvey and Edward Soja elaborately emphasized the fact that space is not a neutral entity that solely contains events or objects; but space itself transforms and shapes what it includes, as well as it is simultaneously reshaped by them. Harvey, renown with his works on the relationship between production of spaces and capitalism, underscores that the assignment of place within a socio-spatial structure indicates distinct roles, capacities for action and access to power within the social order (Harvey 1990, p.419).

As Harvey underlines, the concept of space is vital to the proper understanding of social processes and social change (Harvey 1990, p. 428).

In his book *Postmodern Geographies*, Soja (1989), similarly, highlights the fact that a critical and postmodern understanding of the spatial is taking place since the beginning of the 1980s. Soja works on the conventional narratives on the intellectual history of critical social theory around “the evolving dialectics of space, time and social being; geography, history and society” respectively (Soja 1989, p.3). He emphasizes the importance of exploring a critical viewpoint that focuses on the temporal succession and spatial simultaneity. Soja recognizes that the Western ways of seeing space and spatiality blocks critical interrogations. To him, spatiality is simultaneously a social product, an outcome, and a shaping force in social life. Furthermore, like Lefebvre and Harvey, Soja (1989, pp. 8-9) discusses the vital role of geographically uneven development in the survival of capitalism. These Marxist thinkers basically emphasize the relationship between capitalism and production of spaces in order to recognize not only the economic, but also the cultural and social outcomes related to the spatial dynamics.

In a similar vein, but on another track, Gillian Rose (1993) focuses her works on the gender relations produced and reproduced by the dynamics of the spatial and the temporal. She points to the paradigm shift in theoretical discussions in the early 1980s and argues that spatial structure is not an arena in which social life unfolds but is a “medium” through which social life is produced and reproduced. Rose (1993) underlines the fact that a compressed and dynamic understanding of time and space is necessary to fully grasp their impacts on social processes. With her contribution, it is critical to acknowledge that the spatial is an outcome as well as is an intermediary among all the social processes.

This brings us to the discussion of the differences between the terms; “space” and “place”. Lefebvre (1991) genealogically analyses the meanings given to the concept of space. With the advent of Cartesian logic, space had entered to the realm of the absolute, “As Object opposed to Subject, as *res extensa* opposed to, and present to, *res*

cogitans, space came to dominate by containing them, all senses and all bodies” (Lefebvre 1991, p.1). Afterwards, the modern field of epistemology approached space as a “mental thing or a mental place” (Lefebvre 1991, p.3). Finally, this mental space is approached as something extra-ideological, and the physical space, or place, is imagined as an objective absolute category that can be dominated, shaped and fixed. On the contrary, Lefebvre points to the indefinite multitude of spaces, such as the geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, continental, or global, which are all piled upon each other, interconnected with energy flows among them. Space cannot be the passive locus of social relations; it has active operational and instrumental role on all the social relations (Lefebvre 1991, pp. 8-11). In a way, space is not solely an abstract category; rather it has material impacts on the social world.

Michel de Certeau approaches place as the stable, “proper”, distinguishable, while space as the mobile, multiple and complex that contains the practiced dynamism related to the place (cited in Thornham 2019, p. 53). For de Certeau, space refers to the practiced place. For instance, maps might show certain places from a bird eye view, but people walk through the real streets while practicing the spatial.

Similarly, Doreen Massey (1994, p.1) underlines that the terms space and place have their particular long histories with multiplicity of meanings and connotations. She refers to space as the realms of multiplicity and simultaneity, while place as a concept referring more to a positionality. Spatial is the context formed out of social interrelations at all scales, whereas place is more like a particular articulation of those relations at a particular moment. In this sense, attributing particular identities to particular spaces are “attempts to stabilize meaning of particular envelopes of time-space” (Massey 1994, p.5). In addition, following this track might be considered limited, since there is danger of imposing fixed meaning to attributed spaces as if they are devoid of dynamic simultaneity of social influences (Massey 1994, p. 6). In a way, the concept of space signifies and reminds the dynamism inherent to it. Similar to Lefebvre, Massey (1994, p.4) underlines that the “spatial” is:

“constructed out of the multiplicity of social relations across all spatial scales, from the global reach of finance and telecommunications, through the geography of the tentacles of national political power, to the social relations within the town, the settlement, the household and the workplace... It is a view of space opposed to that which sees it as flat, immobilized surface, as stasis... The spatial is both open to, and a necessary element in, politics in the broadest sense of the word.

The writer also emphasizes that space should be conceptualized in relation to time as well, rather than understood as a static, passive dimension where nothing happens, space must be seen as a dimension with its particular effects and implications. Time is typically coded as masculine, a concept aligned with masculine attributes such as progress, history, civilization, politics or transcendence; whereas space is coded as feminine, holds a position of being invaded, saved, of passivity, stasis and depolitization. Space is always constituted out of social relations and approaching “time-space” as a configuration of social relations, helps recognizing the dynamic simultaneity of the spatial and the temporal (Massey 1994, pp. 2-6).

As discussed above, it might be claimed that spatiality includes and envelopes all social relations, shapes the subjects and their relations with the world, and it is dynamically reshaped by their actions. The spatial includes a practiced dynamism. In contrast to a particular place, such a dynamic concept of space incorporates sociality and power relations imposed on the individuals. Rather than being a passive entity, space should be considered as an element that also acts upon subjects that it inherits. This thesis approaches space with such a dynamic understanding.

Space is also cinema’s raw material (Fullwood 2015, p.19). In film studies, the concept of space has been discussed by many theoreticians, from the impacts of the filmic space on the characters and actions, to the camera’s usage of space that determines the audience’s position. There are also studies more concerned on the ideological implications related to the representations of spaces in films.

The filmic space might be established as less visible, like in the classical narrative filmic texts; or might act upon the characters and shape their actions like the German Expressionist films that create a feeling of claustrophobia for the characters. For instance, Conley underlines that western is a “spatial genre par excellence” (cited in

Thornham 2019, p. 21), where the blank vast landscapes are often invaded by the heroes. On the other side, in noir and neo-noir films, the setting is always the wet, chaotic, dark city with shadows and rain. To sum things up, different genres create atmospheres through particular usages of filmic spaces, while also represent the extra-filmic spaces of social life differently. In a way, as Natalie Fullwood (2015) recognizes a discussion on cinema and space requires combining these two dimensions of filmic and non-filmic spaces, where filmic space is the space that is “constructed by every decision made in the filmmaking process” that helps to establish a coherent fictional space for the narration.

At this point, it might be fruitful to refer to a few recent works on cinema and space, which are akin to the problematics of this thesis. For instance, Vivian Sobchack (1998, p. 144) shows how “homelessness”, or radical externality of environment imprints itself upon the characters of noir films. For her, these are the central themes and knotting points of noir films and the loss of home and retroactive phantasy of imagining this loss is the “structuring absence” of the films. The writer bases her analysis on Bakhtin’s concept of *chronotope* while suggesting that the “lounge time spaces” such as hotel rooms, nightclubs, bars, roadside cafes, diners, cheap motels, cocktail lounges as spaces of postwar era are the master *chronotope* in noir films. Noir films are not simply the metaphorical representations of anxiety but are simultaneous products of the culture that reflects the particularity of the time and space in an historical era (Sobchack 1998, pp. 156-160).

For Sobchack, rather than solely stating that city scape is the space of noir films, she suggests that the “lack of home” constitutes the spatial structure of the films⁵. The writer suggests that spaces of dislocation, isolation and existential alienation such as nightclubs, cocktail lounges, bars, anonymous hotel rooms, diners, cheap roadhouses designate the life world of both the culture and the narrative of noir films. She concludes that film noir corresponds to an idle moment in cultural history; the world of

⁵ This also reminds us Lukacs and Kracauer’s propositions on the “transcendental homelessness” of the modern world that is disintegrated to chaos (Frisby 1985, p. 117), which is also a vacuum of faithlessness that characterizes the modern experience (Levin 1995, p. 13). Transcendental homelessness can be thought as a state of living in continuous transitional space, where nowhere is actually your home.

the unemployed, the loose and the existentially paralyzed that enlivened in the lounge time *chronotope*, which also signifies dismantling of coherence in the domestic sphere (Sobchack 1998, pp. 148-150). Sobchack does not base her analysis on the particularities of the cities but on the socially constructed public spaces of the post-war era, in order to emphasize how they are formed by the dynamics of the social world, also in return how these social spaces shape the characters' actions and being in the world in noir films.

In addition, Sobchack (1998) recognizes that there are no homes, no children, no reproduction aims, no fathers, no mothers or no family rituals in noir films. Rather, there are "idle" men or "loose" women whose sexualities remain undisciplined. In addition, culture's traditional signifiers on private space are temporalized as problematic, ambiguous or dangerous. The focus is on passion, libido, hate, vengeance and boredom rather than love and sublimation to family structure. An example given by Sobchack is on Robert Siodmak's *The Killers* (1946) where a glass of lemonade functions like Barthes's photographic *punctum*⁶, reminding the audience a coherent time and space of domestic sphere in a secure and stable world. Instead, as Sobchack (1998, pp.137-138) highlights that glass of lemonade seems "uncanny" for the double-crossed Swede (Burt Lancaster) and the femme fatale Kitty (Ava Gardner) of the film *The Killers*. In a way, the film does not simply take place in lounge time spaces, or dark wet streets outside home, but also signifies a state of homelessness, where any detail related to the secure sphere of the domestic could be perceived as alienating, uncanny or insecure.

Similarly, in her book *The Apartment Plot* Pamela Robertson Wojcik (2010) examines, popular films between years 1945 and 1975 that predominantly select their settings as the apartments, such as in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954). The writer discusses how the apartment functions as a central narrative device by showing how the setting motivates the actions of the characters (Wojcik 2010, pp. 3-7). She concludes that the

⁶ In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes (1981) develops the concepts of studium and punctum for photographs. The studium denoting the cultural, linguistic, and political interpretation of a photograph, whereas the punctum denoting the wounding, personally touching detail which establishes a direct relationship with the person.

urban apartments provide a vision of “home” centered on values of community, visibility, contact, mobility, impermanence, and porousness that contrasts with views of home as private, stable, and family-based. To her, urban apartments were important spaces for negotiating gender, sexuality, race, and class in mid-twentieth-century America. Again, in her study, a dynamically changing cultural space acts upon the characters, while the meanings given to these social spaces, and how these spaces shape the characters’ actions are discussed as a central topic in her study.

In a similar vein, with her focus on the 1960s Italian cinema, Fullwood (2015, p.15) aims to explore how “cinema expresses gender through space, and space through gender”. The writer focuses on the relationship between cinema and social space created through the medium. As she points, much has been discussed based on the psychoanalytical models in film theory, but less has been explored on how space is designed for the construction of gender norms in cinema through the medium’s formal elements (Fullwood 2015, pp. 28-29). In her study, Fullwood (2015, p.17) diffuses the concepts of place and space and clarifies her position as follows:

I am interested in the gray area that lies on the spectrum between the “subset” place and the “larger category” of space. “Beach,” “office,” “car,” “kitchen”: each of these terms could refer to a specific geographical place, to a point on a map. However, as a type of social space- a social/ spatial category- they also conjure up cultural meaning, including gendered meaning, which varies through history and across geography.

Fullwood (2015) analyzes the scenes in social spaces such the beach, night club, or a car in Italian comedies in order to see how the cultural meanings associated with such social spaces are also bind with certain gender norms. The writer concludes that these cinematic spaces construct certain ideas on gender as well.

Finally, Sue Thornham (2019) in her recent book *Spaces of Women’s Cinema* examines women filmmakers’ relationship to space-time relations. Working on various filmmakers across countries, continents and genres Thornham examines women filmmakers’ films in wilderness and city spaces, which she identifies primarily as masculine spaces; films in closed, interior spaces, which she identifies primarily as feminine spaces; and finalizes her discussions with films taking place in border spaces.

The writer theoretically tackles issues related to defining women's cinema as minor cinema (Thornham 2019, pp. 12-14). Her work is inspiring at various levels since it combines issues regarding space and gender through the lens of women filmmakers. Again, in her research, the spaces selected are not particular cities or places, but spaces like the wilderness, the city, the indoors and the borders.

This brings us to the discussion on the gendered dimension of the socially constructed dynamic spaces. In general terms, particular ways of thinking about space are always tied up with particular constructions of gender relations. When space is imagined to be taken for granted, unbounded, transparent, infinite, or simply everywhere; it is somehow imagined as an abstract notion without boundaries or constraints. The assumption that space is simply there, immanent, static, to be travelled over, lost and found also assumes a male subject of narrative who overarches a static, feminized space. As Thornham (2019, p.1) puts it; "heroes, after all, establish their status as heroes -and as men- through their penetration and conquest of a feminized space and landscape".

Alike, Teresa de Lauretis claims that in culturally familiar narratives, "male-hero-human" are positioned on the side of the subject, in opposition to the "female-obstacle-boundary-space" (cited in Thornham 2019, p.1). In a way female characters are positioned like the space to be reached at the end of the hero's journey where the narrative closure happens. De Lauretis (1984, pp.12-13) suggests that women and cities both become the drive, motivation, unattainable goals and dreams of men . At this point, it might be suggested that not male heroes but female protagonists' relationships to filmic social spaces contain inherent ambivalences then as well. As de Lauretis (1984, p. 35) puts it; "the woman cannot transform the codes; she can only transgress them, make trouble, provoke, pervert, turn the representation into a trap". Such a transgression is a central problematic to be investigated for the purpose of this thesis as well.

Following Fullwood's, Sobschak's and Thornham's studies as examples, this thesis bases its problematic on examining women's relationship to urban space at night and approaches it as an ambivalent theme as such. Rather than being passive, here, the urban space is accepted to be a dynamic sphere that is influential on the characters. Rather

than particular characters' specific relationships to cities, such as Berlin, or Glasgow, or imagining them as certain "places", this thesis is more concerned with the female character's relationship to streets, pubs, and other urban public spaces of night life in order to see how gendered power relations impact them through the spatial dynamics. Such an experience might be related to the discovery of a space, as well as the discovery of the self, which also lays ground for discussing issues related to stories of becoming in and through space.

A female protagonist discovering a male dominated trope, namely the urban space, posits and challenges various issues related to gender. Rather than histories of cities, this thesis thematically combines films that take place in urban landscapes in order to make visible the effects and implications of the spatial on female protagonists. Similar to Sobschack (1998) and Fullwood's (2015) works, social spaces of urban nightlife are central such as the streets, the pubs, the night clubs, and what comes through meeting strangers, having chance encounters, while being in the flow and movement. For the sake of this thesis, the particular time selected is the night and the social space is the urban places of the night. This thesis looks for answers on how such a particular compression of time and space impacts female protagonists in contemporary cinema in order to see how space as a dynamic concept acts upon the female characters and how this is reflected by the cinematic medium. Discussing the relationship between the spatiality, subjectivity and gender is the core aim of this study.

2.2 BACKGROUND: HISTORICAL ROOTS OF A WOMAN'S PROPER PLACE

Although today it is felt like to be a matter solved, historically, women have routinely been punished or intimidated for being outside the domestic sphere. In this section, I will try to posit how women's proper place is historically constructed as the domestic and why it often seems extraordinary or enigmatic to be in the public, especially alone at night in the urban landscape.

Women are associated with the private space. It might be stated that this idea is historically rooted in women's exclusion from the *polis*, from formal politics and the public space throughout history and political thought. During much of Western history, women have been silenced populations in the arena of public speech, their view or role in social processes have been taken for granted or assigned to be secondary (Elshtain 1981, p. 13). Historically, women are associated with matters acclaimed to be natural rather than political.

In *Republic*, Plato dismisses women and slaves from politics, and exclusively focuses on relationships among men; Aristotle denies women's any possibility of public voice or role who are debarred from citizenship and active participation in the *polis* (Elshtain 1981, pp. 29, 46). Domestic space is and had been women's "proper" place. Of course, this does not mean women did not exist in the ancient Greece, nor their place in society was insignificant. In *Flesh and Stone*, Richard Sennett (1994) discusses two particular rituals that women share in the Greek *polis*, *thesmophoria* and *adonia*, which are informal⁷ women exclusive festive activities to celebrate sexual drives, fertility, laughter, dancing, night and darkness, storytelling and singing. Just as Julia Kristeva's notion of semiotic *chora*, which takes place outside culture and meaning, these festivals in a way celebrate rhythm, energetic movement, tonal bodily forces that also disrupt the social and symbolic order.

Among many, Rousseau and Hegel are influential philosophers who reflected upon the rational organization of civil society, while emphasizing the fact that a woman's place is in domestic sphere. In regard to the role of family in the civil organization, Rousseau claims that in the family structure, the father in his very nature ought to command. He approaches women as "volatile" and therefore suggests wielding the female power in the private household. For Rousseau, the nature of things in civil society requires paternal authority (Elshtain 1981, pp.158-159). Along the same line, Hegel excludes women from directly contributing to the "good" of the public; instead, they are defined by their function in the family. Family is a "woman's beginning and her end" in the Hegelian social structure. The male figure runs the family according to the ethos of the

⁷ These festivals are not officially recognized or accepted by the male community.

civil requirements and the male alone has the privilege to become the real substantial citizen (Elshtain 1981, p. 174). Long before the feminist interventions, in *The Manifesto of Communist Party*, and other works, Marx and Engels (1848) would later criticize the alienation of women's position in the family structure and address to this limited position's relation to the bourgeois ideals of capital accumulation and private gain. In her influential book *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millett (1970) would later propose abolishment of the traditional family institution, which, for her, knots patriarchal politics at ideological, biological and sociological levels.

Modernity was mostly expressed through the experiences in the public space (Wolff 1989, p. 12). Chiefly, Baudelaire, Simmel and Benjamin discuss the particular urban experience of modernity⁸. Baudelaire (1863) defines modernity as an "ephemeral, contingent, and fugitive" experience of rapid transitions, where Marx and Engels (1848) would later put it as the era of "all that is solid melting into the air". Surely, the modern experience of public space was owned by males, the women's share was more aligned to a disgraceful morality.

In his influential book *The Fall of Public Man*, Sennett (1974) emphasizes the male character of the "public person". Sennett (1974, p. 23) summarizes the gendered nature of morality regarding the public as follows:

The public as an immoral domain meant rather different things to women and men. For women, it was where one risked losing virtue, dirtying oneself, being swept into "a disorderly and heady swirl". The public and the idea of disgrace were closely allied. The public for a bourgeois man had a different moral tone. By going out in public, or "losing yourself in public," as the phrase occurred in ordinary speech a century ago, a man was able to withdraw from those very repressive and authoritarian features of respectability... So that for men, the immorality of public life was allied to an undercurrent of sensing immorality to be a region of freedom, rather than of simple disgrace, as it was for women.

Prostitution was one of the disobedient marginal presences in the public for women. Wilson (2002) underlines that prostitutes caused a disorder directly linked with the disorder of the French Revolution. In 1796, the municipal authorities ordered a new census for all prostitutes, in 1816 all prostitutes were officially registered, in 1828 all

⁸ Their ideas on city, walking and urban experience are discussed in the next section.

had to have their own *dossier* (Wilson 2002, p. 421). A disciplinary power mechanism based on centralizing knowledge and information, similar to what Foucault (1975) discusses in *Discipline and Punish*, regulated female bodies. Simply walking around in the wrong time and place could put any woman under suspicion of prostitution, which might end up either in jail or in painful and humiliating medical examination centers⁹. Women's public appearance has always been associated with being fallen and linked with their sexuality (Solnit 2000, pp. 191-192).

The New Woman was another figure regarding the appearance of women in the public as marginal presences, which emerged as a "social type" in the newspaper discourse vastly the years between 1880-1895. The new woman figure was breaking stay-at-home life of marriage and motherhood; rather she was enjoying sexuality outside marriage, protesting tight-lacing dresses, bicycling in the streets, smoking, demanding education and economic freedom (Gamble 1998, pp. 259-260). This new woman was modern, her style was distinct and was demanding cultural capital. Sally Ledger (1997, pp. 9-10) discusses how the powerful male and bourgeois dominant discourse promoted ridiculing, attacking and controlling the rebellion new women, meanwhile how the new women reversed this discourse and created one for their own, about their own. The new woman was a threat to status quo, riddled with contradictory characteristics; on one hand she was free, educated, determined therefore was "higher" from an evolutionary perspective, on the other, she was stereotyped as mannish, asexual biological type¹⁰ devoid of proper manners (Ledger 1997, p. 16). More significantly, the new women figure at the *fin de siècle* gained access to the public spaces of the cities without excuses and promoted being single as a life choice.

During heated feminist debates, much has been said from raising woman's particular consciousness to deconstructing binary sex categories, especially after the 1960s. Feminist scholars devoted significant attention to ideologies of women's "proper" place in society, to social division of responsibilities and to the realities of the lives of women

⁹ Solnit discusses that in some cases women lost their virginity in those centers during examination or some committed suicide after such a humiliating experience. For details see Rebecca Solnit, 2000, "Walking After Midnight" in *Wanderlust*, (pp. 232-249).

¹⁰ Marlene Dietrich's iconic mannish suits can be seen as an example for the new women type.

of different classes in the urban environment (Wolff 2007, pp. 15-16). Especially, the second wave feminism emphasized the importance of the statement; “personal is political” and embraced discussing domestic matters such as marriage, child rearing, elder care, sexual practices, reproductive rights, domestic violence, employment opportunities, which are all seen as areas of male domination justified based on natural claims. On another track, socialist feminists questioned issues related to women’s unpaid and invisible responsibilities of domestic labor, child and elderly care and systematic exclusion from well-paid jobs in the labor market. Although the problems related to women’s role in the domestic space was made visible, the issue is still assumed to be taken for granted and working as a normative understanding manifesting itself in various contemporary discourses and cultures.

The possibility of taking a walk, being outside is often associated with “looking for trouble” or “being fallen” for women, especially at nights across many cultures. Every woman learns what to do and what not, by building their cognitive maps of danger zones in the urban environment at nights. But women’s experience in public was not and is not non-existent rather it has always been different. It might be atonal, rhythmic like it was outside the Greek *polis*, on the streets together with men like it was during French Revolution, in the neighborhood in front of their doors chitchatting and child rearing together all day. It might be mannish yet asking for more like the modern new woman, or like the bourgeois women shopping alone in the arcades; or like the prostitutes seen as a great threat to society, or the working-class women in the early industrial era. It might be claimed that all of which questioned the hegemonic regulating discourses and reshaped, for better or worse, the existing power relations in the gendered social division of space. Even so, it might be stated that so far women’s experience in the public is more predominantly shaped and controlled by the masculine mentality and morality. Loaded with this baggage, a woman wandering alone at night might still sound like as an “enigmatic state” to be discovered, a state to be justified, or a state of excuse even today across many cultures.

2.3 THE MODERN CITY AND ITS URBAN TYPES

The modern city was predominantly a space of production and economic circulation. With the intensification of urban populations, the city space has become more of a transitional space in flux, which is often composed of strangers and crowds that continuously flow in the boulevards and department stores of newly developing cities. With the development of the modern city, the urban experience has changed forever.

As an historian of culture, in his work *Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin traces an *ur-history*¹¹ of the 19th century mostly through reading the experience of the modern capitalist city. Benjamin is commonly interested in the new forms of spectacles and the newly developing spaces of early capitalism, such as the arcades, world fairs or the panoramas. These places are expositions of the phantasmagoria¹² wherein industry and technology are presented as mythic powers capable of producing the present and the future as a world of peace, class harmony and abundance (Buck Morss 1990, p. 86). Similar to the other theoreticians of the Frankfurt School, Benjamin was interested in showing the inherent contradictions of what seems to be in harmony and the urban landscape provides fruitful discussions on the matter since it inescapably diffuses, different classes, identities and experiences onto each other.

Rather than being a sole sphere of residency or economic activity, it is claimed that the city sphere was also dynamically affecting the mentality of the citizens and their behavior (Simmel 1908), forming particular relations of production and consumption (Benjamin 1983; Harvey 1990; Lefebvre 1991), creating distinct urban types and historical figures (Baudelaire 1863) while also designing the actions of the citizens (Benjamin 1969). Such a dynamic understanding of the urban experience could only be reshaped by reclaiming the right to city and everyday life (Lefebvre 1968) or simply by

¹¹ Buck-Morss defines *ur-history* as investigation of the origins of the present historical moment, which remains largely invisible at that time (Buck Mors 1989, p. 47).

¹² *Phantasmagoria* is a horror theater form that uses lanterns, shadows and the like, in order to create a bizarre and frightening setting. Benjamin borrows the term from Marx, in order to point to the fact that the means of production of a cultural commodity is invisible in capitalist spectacles, which are *phantasmagorias* that seduce the senses in commodity culture (Buck-Morss 2000, p.180)

walking in the city in order to comprehend the complex flux of relations and networks (de Certeau 2002).

Simmel discusses alterations in the mentality of urban dwellers. In his book *Metropolis and Mental Life*, Georg Simmel recognized the metropolis as a structure and a field of social forces. For Simmel (1907), intensification of nervous stimulation in metropolitan life combined with money economy leads to a *blasé* attitude, a kind indifference to the external stimuli and self-preservation in the inner life of its citizens. In metropolitan life, inwardness, being indifferent to all genuine individualities and events, impersonal timetables, strict schedules, calculability, precision, and punctuality are preferred whereas passionate, irrational impulses are degraded (Simmel 1907, pp. 178-183). Simmel suggests that such an indifferent attitude is strictly connected to the money economy, which also sounds similar to Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, where money erases the value and meaning distinctions among things. According to Simmel, such an indifference to events, crowds or things started existing in the mentalities of the modern subjects with the beginning of the urban city life. The modern urban experience is fast, transitional and as Baudelaire (1863) famously puts, "ephemeral".

Correspondingly, modern urban experience was described through characters of the city life by the early urban thinkers. During the 19th century, certain social types were being categorized in popular pocket-sized volumes called *physiologies*¹³ in order to make strangers familiar. Physiologies, according to Benjamin, investigated types of people that might be encountered in the society, that one can distinct them just as "taking a look at the marketplace" (Benjamin 1983, p. 35). In *The Painter of Modern Life*, Baudelaire (1863, pp. 26-29) discusses stereotypical social characters such as the dandy, the man of the crowd, the flâneur, the old woman, the lesbian and the prostitute. Meanwhile, Edgar Allan Poe (1844) follows detectives in dark, wet streets at night in his early short detective stories that also give hints on the particularity of modern urban experience.

¹³ In 1841 there were seventy-six new physiologies and after that the genre declined (Benjamin 1983, p. 35)

In *Arcades Project*, Benjamin's traces some motifs such as boredom, dust, fashion or the social types of city life such as the prostitute, the collector, the gambler and the *flâneur* as a method of discovering the modern urban experience (Buck-Morss 1990, p.49). Buck-Morss (1986, p.101) notices that Benjamin avoided more obvious social types and preferred to go to the margins in order to link them to the dynamics of industrialism.

Similarly, Simmel also discusses a character called "stranger" in urban life, who is both an insider and an outsider, both intimate and alien at the same time. Despite his/her being inorganically appended nature, the stranger is still a member of the group (Donald 1999, p. 155). The stranger comes today and stays tomorrow, participates in activities yet remains distant. Through the stranger character, Simmel in a way exemplifies the ambiguous and in-between fauna of modernity.

In a way, these theorists of the early modern city experience, followed characters of the city or urban stereotypes, in order to read the city experience like a text through their actions, dresses, or attitudes. Reading the "city as a text" (de Certeau 2002) through such stereotypical characters can be imagined as a method of understanding the distinctiveness of the urban experience, urban relations, societal dynamics and the newly changing world. Such a method also reminds the methodological perspective of Arjun Appadurai (1986, p.5), which chiefly concentrates on the "things-in-motion" in order to illuminate the human and social interactions. Relatedly, de Certeau (2002, pp. 117-121) connects the urban experience to mobility, which has nothing to do with the bird-eye view of the city but the streets on the ground, that connect people, relations, routes and networks. Not the gazer from above, but the walker or the wanderer knows the lived space and appropriates the actualized city experience. Similarly, this thesis also follows urban characters as a method for discovering the gendered dimension of urban experience represented in contemporary cinema. Like Lefebvre's (1968) emphasis on the right to city, which is a demand for transformed and renewed access to urban life and a demand for reshaping the organization of the urban sphere, this thesis follows female characters of urban night life in contemporary cinema to see their share in the "right to the city".

2.4 MOBILITY, *FLÂNERIE* AND THEIR GENDERED DIMENSION

Richard Sennett (1996) underlines that the modern individual is, above all else, “a mobile human being.”. With the help of medical revolution, an analogy has been made among human body and the city. The discovery of blood circulation had impacts on city planning, on the imagination of the constantly circulating and moving modern individual and on the theory of market economy of free flow. A “healthy city” with respiratory organs, continuous circulation, and flowing arteries and veins through which “people streamed like healthy blood corpuscles” was imagined as the perfect city envisioned by the early Enlightenment planners. The mobile individuals could move freely in this “healthy and sterile” urban setting and could enjoy exploiting the possessions that were also circulating freely (Sennett 1996, p. 256).

But soon after the French Revolution and other uprisings, it is also recognized that the free flow of crowds should be organized or rather designed. According to Benjamin, modern city space was organized with the requirements and dynamics of the market. For instance, the Hausmanization process of Paris¹⁴, reflects a vision of controlling the urban space which was basically based on elimination of formation of barricades, as well as constructing linear routes leading to markets. Such an orderly organization of the city based on a single perspective also reflects the idea of controlling space that is visible both to the citizens and to the rulers. As Benjamin underlines, Haussmann’s Paris not only eliminates the history of the city but also absolutizes a perfect present time as the best (Benjamin 1969, pp.165-172).

At this point, an ironic notion; “being alone in the crowds” is worth being mentioned. By definition, the phrase indicates inherent contradictions since one cannot be by herself/himself among many. But interestingly, it expresses a feeling of loneliness amid

¹⁴ Baron Hausmann was a French official to redesign Paris’s urban planning in the mid-nineteenth century. According to Benjamin, the Haussmanization process of Paris is closely linked to the Paris Commune who could rule and govern Paris behind the barricades in 1871. Benjamin underlines that Haussman prevents Paris from a civil war by eliminating production of barricades and trenches on the new wide boulevards of Paris. So, Benjamin links production and design of space to its political and sociological ends.

crowds, a feeling of solitude among the masses and an urban culture that organizes constantly circulating strangers without any connection. It might be thought as a phrase that articulates the enlightenment and modern dream of the urban planners, where the city is envisioned as a place in which unconnected masses circulate freely. Similar to Simmel's claims on blasé attitude, examining the American culture of the 1950s, David Riesman (1969) had published a book on the fact, and he claimed that the culture was more moving away from community and tradition-orientation to an inward-directed, lonely consumer society.

In brief, it might be claimed that, historically, urban circulations were first promoted by the early city planners analogically similar to the blood circulation of the body, then controlled and restricted to eliminate the unwelcome movements of the masses, and at a point the urban landscape had become a circulation of the masses who are distant and stranger to each other. Today, the "lonely crowds" (Riesman 1969) of the urban life are continuously flowing in the overpopulated cities, sharing the streets, though remain mostly unconnected. Nonetheless, the cityscape inescapably provides chance encounters to these lonely strangers in the flux.

Mobility necessarily requires a temporal and spatial change. When mobile, one needs to pass public spaces most of the time and it necessarily requires some time to pass along. Walking is one of the basic forms of mobility that might be performed in solitude among the lonely masses. Frédéric Gros (2014) associates walking with freedom and throwing off the burdens of the daily routine. In *Philosophy of Walking*, the writer underlines that a suspensive freedom comes by walking, which liberates one from time and space and from the web of exchanges of the society (Gros 2014, pp. 12-14). Walking can lead to more rebellious or transgressive ends, to big departures from life, or to internal journeys of thinking, solitude and being by oneself for a while. Any case, not particularly going from one place to another, but walking or being mobile, itself is a temporal and spatial break from life and most importantly it requires being outside.

Similarly, rather than a conscious, open, rational act; de Certeau finds walking poetic and dynamic. As a method, he suggests reading the city as a text, and underlines that the

“long poem of walking” manipulates the spatial organizations of the city. De Certeau claims that this long poem of walking creates shadows and ambiguities, with possibilities of successive encounters and occasions that constantly alter it while making it the other’s blazon. Through walking, the wanderer makes some parts of the city disappear, while also enlarges, distorts, exaggerates, or fragments some other parts. So, through walking, the urban experience becomes personal and it is embodied by the city’s inhabitants (de Certeau 2002, pp. 101-102).

In brief, walking is like an opening to new possibilities, both internally and externally. It is shaped by encounters, while is a *force* of shaping others’ urban experiences. It is personal and dynamic in nature. Therefore, one should create a text of his/her own out of the urban experience through mobility, in order to take his/her share in this productive dynamic process.

Flâneur is one of those figures whose ontology lies in his ability of wandering in the crowds in the urban environment. In a way, the flâneur takes the “long poem of walking” in the 19th century Paris and gets lost in the “lonely crowds”. In *The Painter of Modern Life*, among the other stereotypical social characters such as the dandy, the women, the man of the crowd and the prostitute, Baudelaire (1863, p.9) defines the perfect flâneur as follows:

The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water for fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be the center of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world.

Benjamin’s flâneur “botanizes on the asphalt” and like Baudelaire’s, the crowd is the asylum for him (Benjamin 1969, p. 170). Gros underlines that the urban flâneur experiences a type of walking that is distinct from the lovers of nature, who are walking in solitude. Rather; “the flâneur walks, unlike the mere loafer, always stopping to see the attraction or stare entranced into shop windows. The flâneur walks, he makes his way even through the crowd” (Gros 2014, p. 238).

According to Gros (2014), *flânerie* presupposes three elements; city, crowds and capitalism. The crowds the flâneur is walking among are not composed of people on the march, or big demonstrations of united demands but a crowd with contradictory interests, unknown faces, strangers and anonymity (Gros 2014, p. 239-240). While examining the poem titled “To a Passer-by”¹⁵, Benjamin recognizes that the crowds are no more only a refuge for criminals to get invisible, but are by themselves fascinating (Benjamin 1983, p. 45). Fascinated but detached, the flâneur observes the flow of the city, the phantasmagoria of the arcades; strolling in the streets where things appear divorced from their history of relations and of production (Buck-Morss 1986, p. 106). In this sense, flânerie is connected to capitalism, or in general terms the commodification of every aspect of life. Benjamin’s flâneur is intoxicated by the streets; strolling aimlessly but with the momentum increased by the random temptations (Benjamin 2002, p. 398) of the commodified culture. As Gros puts it; “The flâneur has better things to do: remythologize the city, invent new divinities, explore the poetic surface of the urban spectacle.” (Gros 2014, p. 244). Furthermore, the flâneur is aesthetically and sensually attached to space (Haaland 2013, p. 596). He feels everywhere at home and the streets welcome him with indeterminate possibilities of excitement.

Gros also highlights that crowds give a king of solitude to the flâneur. Gros (2014, pp. 241) puts to words as follows:

He melts into the mechanical mass, but voluntarily, to conceal himself there. After that, anonymity is not a constraint that crushes him, but an opportunity for enjoyment, enabling him to feel more vividly himself from his private internal vantage point. Since he is hiding, he won't experience anonymity as oppression, but as opportunity. Amid the dense, gloomy solitude of the crowd, he carves out that of an observer and poet: no one can see what he is looking at! He is like a wrinkle in the crowd.

In addition to getting lost in the crowds, another significant aspect of *flânerie* is related to observation of the urban environment. The flâneur is not in urge, and his mind is occupied with multiple stimuli. The flâneur represents a gaze upon the city, upon people, upon changing social relations as well as upon women. The flâneur keeps a critical distance. Pollock (2000, p.94) summarizes flâneur’s gaze as follows:

¹⁵ “*A une passante*” is a poem written by Baudelaire in *Fleurs du mal*, which describes a man’s encounter with an unknown woman in the crowd, the impossibility of ever meeting with her again and the fascination with this idea.

The flâneur symbolizes the privilege or freedom to move about the public arenas of the city observing but never interacting, consuming the sights through a controlling but rarely acknowledged gaze, directed as much at other people as at the goods for sale. The flâneur embodies the gaze of modernity, which is both covetous and erotic.

It might be suggested that the flâneur's gaze is also impressionistic. The peculiar characteristics of modernity lie in its transient and fugitive nature of encounters and the impressions made about the city. Baudelaire's flâneur enjoys such impressionistic, fugitive, ephemeral encounters in the crowds; enjoys getting lost, and yet feels pleasure and completeness out of this. Simmel's account of the metropolitan personality, on the contrary, consists in the intensification of nervous stimulation and the *blasé* attitude towards these impressionistic multiple stimuli (Wolff 1989, pp. 4-7). In both cases, either hidden, detached or fascinated, the relationship with the city requires handling such multiple stimuli directed towards the eye of the flâneur. Nevertheless, the flâneur is comfortable at looking at the society of spectacle without being harassed, he has the privilege to choose either to enjoy and get carried away with or detach himself from these multiple stimuli.

Wolff suggests that the dandy, the flâneur, the hero, the stranger, all figures that epitomize the experience of modern life are inevitably male figures. Whereas, the women equivalent social types of the public are the prostitute, the widow, the old lady, the lesbian, the murder victim and the passing lady (*une passante*) Baudelaire mentions in his poems, who are not the "eyes to observe" but are the "objects of the gaze" during botanizing on the asphalt (Wolff 1989, pp. 9-10).

This brings us to the discussions on "*flâneuseing*". The term "flâneuse" mentioned in the dictionary for the first time in 1905, with two separate meanings: as the feminine form of flâneur and as a "kind of long chair"¹⁶ (Elkin 2017). As Boutin (2012, p.128) suggests the discourse on the flâneur inevitably assumes his male gender. Male characteristic of *flânerie* and the possibility of a "female *flâneuse*" are discussed by many scholars: Pollock (1988); Wolff (1989); Wilson (1992); Friedberg (1994); Gleber

¹⁶ Elkin (2017) comments that the only kind of curious idling a woman does is imagined similar to and associated with lying down, as if women could only daydream about *flânerie* while they are resting on a long chair.

(1999); Parsons (2000); Solnit (2000); Gluck (2003) and Tester (2014) more or less most of whom indicated that looking for a *flâneuse* as the male equivalent of modern flâneur is futile, rather women's experience in the city has always been different than their male counterparts.

While accepting male privilege of the concept, Janet Wolff (1989) concludes that inventing the modern *flâneuse* is pointless. For her, the essential point is that "such a character was rendered impossible by the sexual division of nineteenth century" and the literature on experiences of the modern in its private manifestations are lacking. She also acknowledges that the experiences of "those women who did appear in the public arena" like the *femme passante* in Baudelaire's poem are unknown (Wolff 1989, p. 14). Similarly, Griselda Pollock, working on the representation of women in modern art works, underlines that modernity should not be held as a given category to which we "add women" (Pollock 1988, p. 77). Pollock (1988, p.98) states there cannot be the female version of the quintessential masculine flâneur figure because:

The public and private division functioned on many levels. As a metaphorical map in ideology, it structured the very meaning of the terms masculine and feminine within its mythic boundaries. In practice as the ideology of domesticity became hegemonic, it regulated women's and men's behavior in the respective public and private spaces. Presence in either of the domains determined one's social identity and therefore, in objective terms, the separation of the spheres problematized women's relation to the very activities and experiences we typically accept as defining modernity.

On a similar account, Solnit (2000, p.200) underlines "no literary detective has found and named" an actual female flâneur, while Gleber (1999, p.175) underscores *flâneuse* as an absent figure in the public sphere of modernity, both in the cultural texts and cities. On the other hand, Parsons while accepting that observing the social space has been exclusively regarded as a male privilege and therefore *flânerie* has also become a metaphor for the gendered scopic hierarchy in observation of the urban space; she also suggests that Wolff and Pollock both overlook the flâneur's inherent contradictions (Parsons 2000, pp. 4-5). Parsons suggests that feminist critics need to move away from a "focus on the urban observer as leisured flâneur" in which a detached masculine scopic authority is inherent, to alternative experiences that are performed with "fresh eyes" of women that are not necessarily detached but observing within. With this,

Parsons claims, the concept is deterritorialized and its masculine privilege is challenged. Parsons concentrates on those women for whom “the city operates as not just as setting or image, but as a constituent of identity” (Parsons 2000, pp. 6-7). I agree with the view that *flâneuse* is not simply a female incarnation of the male counterpart, since her vision is fresh and different because it is devoid of the core of invisibility that exists in masculine scopic regime. The *flâneuse* is seen. Furthermore, urban encounters shape and constitute female identity in different ways than the male counterparts. Therefore, I approach the experience of city for *flâneuses* as constituents of their identities and aim to show their “fresh eyes” that include aspects of female gaze, which have the capacity to observe within, rather than a detached, distant touristic gaze.

Such a subjective experience of involvement with the city with “fresh eyes” is recognized in two French New Wave films; Louis Malle’s (1958) *Elevator to the Gallows* and Agnès Varda’s (1962) *Cléo from 5 to 7*. Susan Hayward (2000) claims that in these two films, female protagonists were at their closest to the “modernist flâneur”, and the characters’ participation to the city and their experiences are influential for the transformation of their identities. Hayward (2000, p.27) puts it as follows:

Rarely, does the woman occupy a voiced position, does she become in a sense a truly female modernist flâneur with power to walk through the city on her own terms (much as the male flâneur did before her). Only two films of woman as female modernist flâneur spring immediately to mind: Cléo walking through Paris as she faces death in Agnès Varda's Cléo de 5 à 7 (1961), and Florence roving the streets of Paris at night searching for her lover in Louis Malle's Ascenseur pour l'échafaud (1957). In both instances it is their subjectivities and subjective experience of the city that we are privy to.

Truly, Florence Carala’s (Jeanne Moreau) night walk provides insights of a modernist *flâneuse* in the Louis Malle’s *Elevator to the Gallows* (1957). The film fuses film noir aesthetics and storyline with French New Wave themes. Briefly, the film opens with Florence and Julien’s (Maurice Ronet) telephone conversation about their cold-blooded murder plan on killing Florence’s rich husband. On that very Saturday evening Julien commits the murder, but due to some unfortunate coincidence, he is trapped in the elevator for the remaining part of the film. Florence is left uninformed about his whereabouts and desperately looks for Julien in the streets, bars and cafes of Paris all night long.

As the main character of the film, Florence is the center of the story as a female protagonist, her motivations are mostly explained, she actively solves the puzzle story and the camera mostly follows her actions. Throughout the movie, she is in the public spaces of the city, always mobile looking for her lover. Through her mobility, the film builds its storyline.

Florence walks freely outside at night in most of the filmic time. She wanders at night to find ease; aimlessly and carelessly dissolves in the streets of Paris. Through her walking, we see the city, the nightlife, “lounge time spaces” as well as landmark places of Paris. She is not afraid at all of what the night in the city brings to a lonely female wanderer. She ditches every corner of Paris’ male-dominated spaces and even risks being handed to the police station for prostitution suspicion. As Buck-Morss discusses, prostitution was the female version of *flânerie* in modern literature, and women who loitered risked being seen as whores when they were streetwalking (Buck-Morss 1986, p. 119). Florence is held to the police station as a suspect of prostitution because she was alone outside late at night. In a way, the film exemplifies how the law quickly assumes a woman’s alignment to sex-work if she is alone at night wandering¹⁷.

In terms of space and gender relations, interestingly, female characters are always outside, but male characters are portrayed as trapped in the film. Furthermore, Florence’s gaze upon the city is active, and she exercises a power of looking upon the city. She searches the city like a detective with an agenda, therefore her look is not fascinated by the spectacle she is observing, instead desperately concentrated, determined, and personal. Neither Florence’s female gaze is close to shop windowing nor to a touristic leisured gaze. Rather it is particular, personal and fresh. It does not objectify or consume the spectacles of the city, rather passes through them. In that sense, she does not randomly engage with what the night in the city brings but wanders anxiously in the public spaces of Paris. Rather than an emphasis on space, her being-in-the-world in that space is emphasized through focusing on her facial expressions while

¹⁷ Solnit examines historical roots of women’s presence in public after midnight and its direct connection to their sexuality. The writer suggests that the recording process of prostitution had led to regulation of sexuality. While men’s sexual conducts remain private, women’s sexuality became a public matter (Solnit 2000, pp. 232-236).

blurring the background (Figure 2.1). In addition to the emphasis on her facial expressions, a voice over reflecting her inner speech accompanies the character during her walk; both of which enhance the personal mood of the character's relation to the city she is wandering in. In a way, she wants to dissolve in the city.

Figure 2.1: Florence wandering in the streets



Source: Louis Malle (1957), *Elevator to the Gallows*

In solitude and despair, Florence walks for herself, with her inner voice she walks into the flux without any fear of insult, she is controversial in herself and is indifferent to the patriarchal and institutional gazes. Though many random looks follow her actions (Figure 2.2), she does not notice them nor gets irritated by them. Hardly, her outlook is inciting, (she does not even wear make-up), but her attitude and solitude attract enough attention or makes her an object to be looked at in the public.

Figure 2.2: Florence being looked at while strolling



Source: Louis Malle (1957), *Elevator to the Gallows*

The nighttime of Paris is portrayed aesthetically as in noir films through the female protagonist's lens. The state of being-in-the-night at the city is given through shades, shadowy wet streets with themes based on moral ambivalence, corruption, crime, greed, and alienation. The film takes place in spaces like motel rooms, bars, prison cells, rental

rooms, and in an elevator. Therefore, the idea of “loss of home” (Sobchack 1998, p. 146) is signified through the use of these filmic spaces. Yet, the city Florence is wandering is not a dangerous place, being outside is not unsafe, and everyone can fit in the city. In that sense female flânerie is not dangerous for Florence, and her indifferent attitude, existential mood, being intact with her feelings during the flânerie might be thought as a kind of performance. Yet, the two-abovementioned incidents prove that she is in a male dominated gendered sphere and therefore transgressing certain norms. Being held to a police station for prostitution suspicion proves an institutionalized normativity on female sexuality and being followed by anonymous male gazes throughout the film demonstrates an objectifying male gaze upon female wanderers.

To conclude, Florence’s spatial and temporal journey, her night walk in the city, helps her recognize her feelings of regret and passion. Such a walking in desperation and regret might be thought as transformative, since through her inner speech the audience understands that not the money, but true love is what she is actually searching for in life.

Similarly, another French film of the same era, Agnès Varda’s *Cléo from 5 to 7* (1962) provides hints of a modernist flâneuse character as Hayward (2000, p. 27) recognizes. Although the film does not take place at nighttime, the character’s involvement with the city and her transformation through this engagement is worth citing.

The film takes place two hours before a famous and beautiful singer Cléo’s (Corinne Marchand) is meeting with her doctor for a possible diagnosis of cancer. Awaiting the results, Cléo is immensely worried, and the film is about Cléo’s spending time at home and then in the streets of Paris and her existential situation facing life, death, beauty and fame.

Unlike Florence Carala of *Elevator to the Gallows* who is preoccupied with her emotions rather than her outlook, Cléo is very much interested with her feminine - almost baby-doll- image in the first half of the film. Mouton (2001) underlines that, Cléo is represented as a fetishized object to be looked at, who is very self-involved in

the first half of the film. Though she was blind to her surroundings at this phase, she gradually opens her eyes and allows the city to transform her (Mouton 2001, p. 3). After a certain point, Cléo leaves behind the famous singer and gets lost in the crowds, by both observing it and being a part of it. The city welcomes the character with its shiny weather, crowds, shops, cafes, spectacles, strangers and streets.

The enclosed spaces like home provide discomfort to the character, whereas she escapes to the exteriors and eases herself outside. Forbes (2002) underlines that the film is as much about Paris as about Cléo. The film shows “everyday Paris” with a woman’s vision, which is also combined with the character’s emotional and existential preoccupations in the second half (Forbes 2002, pp.83-84). It might be stated that her vision upon the city is fresh and personalized, she gets amazed and carried away with what she sees; yet searches for signs of death or life wherever she looks.

Mouton (2001) also suggests that the café scene of the film provides a remarkable example for *cinécriture*¹⁸, while also showing how Cléo becomes transformed from a spectacle and fetishized object into a subject who looks. In the scene, Cléo responds to the sounds and images in the surrounding making them her own. After this sequence, Cléo starts being a completely different person while becoming a part of the city (Mouton 2001, pp. 11-12). In a way, Cléo turns from a famous beautiful singer to a random stranger in the streets, who finds shelter in the crowds, who gets lost in the dynamic flux of the ordinary, fascinated and carried away by the urban spectacles like a modern *flâneuse*. Cléo puts her situation to words as “today everything amazes me” while talking to her new acquaintance, a French soldier she just met by the end of her walk. Her involvement to the ordinary life amazes the female protagonist. Her journey in the streets, her *flânerie*, provides a temporal and spatial break to the routine. In a way, her internal state about life, death or beauty are fused to what the city randomly offers to the character; and out of this fusion the character experiences a self-transformation.

¹⁸ A way of “cinematic writing” that Varda advocates as the form of narrating, which emphasizes feelings, visual emotions and sound emotions provided by the cinematic medium.

Another contemporary example, though cannot be imagined as a modern *flâneuse* per se, comes from Claire Denis' film *Vendredi Soir / Friday Night* (2002)¹⁹ in which the female protagonist actively engages with the city one night until morning. But this time, the audience is stuck in a car most of the filmic time.

Having packed up her possessions to move in with her lover, Laure (Valérie Lemercier) jumps in her car to have dinner with friends but cannot reach the location since she gets stuck in a terrible traffic jam. Again, we are in Paris, and a mass transportation strike has thrown the traffic into chaos. While spending time, listening to music, and observing the streets, Laure notices a calm and self-assured stranger, Jean (Vincent Lindon), approaching her car. She lets the passer-by into her car and the two strangers become lovers for one night. The film depicts, almost without dialogue, the development of the strangers' mutual attraction "with a minimalist storyline, with its limited use of places and near unity of time" (Beugnet 2007, p. 80).

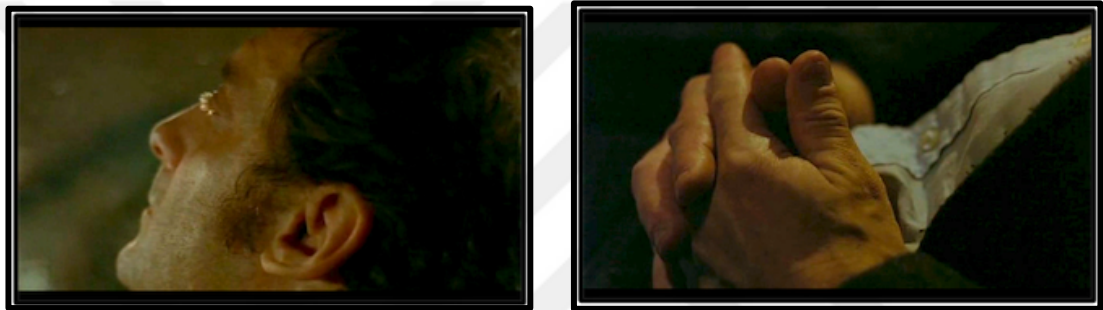
The main character, Laure, is outside her domestic space in most of the filmic time and she is always on the move. The film is a road movie juxtaposed with limited movement. As Bertram recognizes it does not provide the liberating mobility, we would expect from a road narrative, rather provides an experience of immobility and slowness (Bertram 2014, p. 25). In that sense, the film offers an unusual example on im/mobility, invisible commons of the urban, chaotic nature of city experience and the lonely crowds that have to share this extraordinary state of the city involuntarily for a time interval. Captivatingly, the film engages with life and the chaotic city, rather than distracting the audience from such a mess.

The film often uses close-ups in very small spaces such as the car, the tiny hotel room, or the restaurant toilet. Laure's emotions are conveyed through her look rather than words (Figure 2.3). The character actively looks on the stranger in her car while making him an object to be looked at. The film contains very few dialogues, rather the female protagonist looks or imagines "as if's; of what would have happened if she had brought

¹⁹ The film premiered at the 2002 Venice FF, won Best Cinematography in 2004 Chlotrudis Awards, nominated to Best Direction in Chlotrudis Awards. *IMDB*, 2020, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0295743/awards?ref_=tt_awd [accessed 9 September 2020].

Paul to her friends' house or what might have happened when Paul enters the restaurant toilet with the attractive young woman sitting in the next table. Similar to Florence Carala, and Cléo, Laure's personal state, her emotions and inner moods are at the focus of the film, but this time through her point-of-view shots and daydream sequences. The director captures expressions and looks, small gestures with close-up shots in order to convey Laure's thoughts. Bertram (2014, p.41) recognizes that the consistent use of close-ups and affection images convey emotions of the characters to the viewer via proximity.

Figure 2.3: Laure's active look upon the stranger conveyed through PoV shots



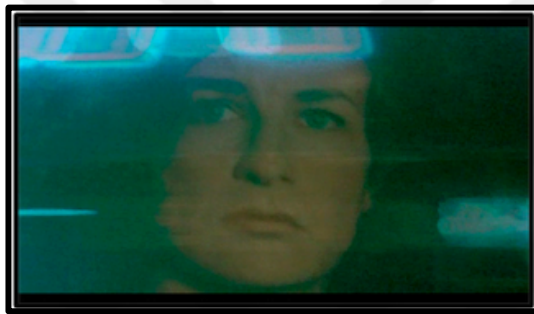
Source: Claire Denis (2002), *Vendredi Soir*

The film tells the story of one-night stand of total strangers from Laure's point of view and follows the female character's actions. It might be claimed that the film is also about Laure's past which is not much promising or routine; her present, that is full of feelings like jealousy, immense attraction and passion; and her future on which she is very indecisive. The audience follows Laure's inner world and external reactions at one night in the city alone by herself. Without voiceover, and with hardly any dialogue, the film constructs a "vivid sensory world to which corresponds a web of emotions as well as internal reflections: attraction, fear of the unknown, panic and pleasure" (Beugnet 2007, pp.192–194).

Laure's look is active throughout the film. Her gaze upon the city is impressionistic like a flâneuse's. Through her impressionistic lens, the camera pans around the people on the city streets on a Friday night like a documentary from a car window level. The camera tracks the streets replicating the car's movement. The car both as a shelter and a burden provides plenty of time to examine people's attitudes, expressions, or conflicts

in the traffic jam. This enclosed space also gives freedom to observe from a distance (Figure 2.4). Beugnet states that the limited space of the car, in which much of the film's first half is spent, is not a trap but a shelter for the character; since its warmth and coziness is directly contrasted with the cold wetness of the outside. Furthermore, the car provides the opportunity of isolation and an inclusive and overseeing gaze without any danger (Beugnet 2007, p. 81). Laure enjoys observing the chaotic city from that detached and secure space. In addition, the sound design with car horns and shouts amplifies the chaotic impact. The city is portrayed as noisy, wet, dark, overcrowded and extremely cold yet she does not step back from engaging this chaotic city.

Figure 2.4: Laure examining the streets inside her car



Source: Claire Denis (2002), *Vendredi Soir*

Laure's house, from which she is about to move, is represented as a place of boredom, while her future home does not seem promising. Laure seems at a threshold in her life and is indecisive. She does not seem embracing a committed relationship, while constantly saying that she is not going to throw away her books, or clothes while moving in. Furthermore, her hesitant state increases when she decides not to call her boyfriend after meeting the handsome stranger. In short, the chaos of the city coincides with the turbulence of Laure's inner state on that particular night.

Laure's involvement with the city at night and the chance encounter with the stranger have transformative impacts on her. At the very final scene, Laure runs in the streets thankfully and cheerfully (Figure 2.5), probably with the biggest smile on her face throughout the film. Laure does not seem regretful of what has happened, or because of being unfaithful to her boyfriend, rather she seems having a time of her own,

discovering her sexuality and adventurous side. Such a secret to be kept for herself, an interval to think about her future is provided by the city, and its chaos.

Figure 2.5: Laure running freely at the dawn



Source: Claire Denis (2002) *Vendredi Soir*

2.5 A GENDERED SPATIALITY: URBAN SPACE

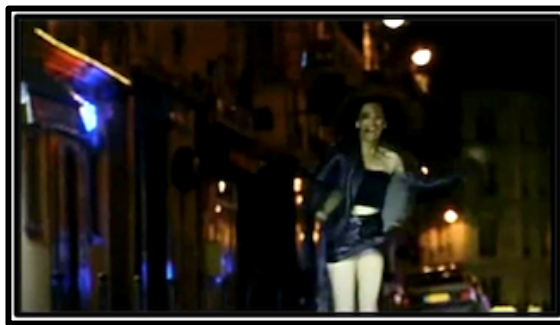
In its broadest sense, today, urban studies are interested in the topics that connect the social, economic, relational and dynamic affairs that take place in the city life. Urban space is the umbrella term that includes discussions related to multifaceted levels of power relations produced through the spatial organization of the city; such as issues related to spatial segregation, dislocation, uneven development and inequality, precarity, racial segregation, gender differences in the households, poverty, crime, gentrification and the like. All these matters are strictly connected to the social organization of the city life, households, and spaces of production and consumption on the local and global level. Urban space also includes a kind of abstraction that might be thought as things common to city life and its dynamic impacts on its inhabitants. In a way, the organization of the physical social space creates distinct material impacts on all of its citizens.

The urban space is a structure that diffuses different social classes, genders, identities, throughout days and nights. The continuous flow of the city is open to chance encounters, meeting strangers, or the “love at last sight” as Baudelaire (1863) famously puts it. The city experience segregates and organizes different social classes or identities

through city planning and gentrification projects, while inescapably reconnects and diffuses them on streets and public spaces.

One good example on such a diffusion of different social classes might be from Colin Serreau's film *Chaos* (2001)²⁰, in which a young prostitute's encounter with a bourgeois family in the middle of the night changes their lives forever. In the opening scene of the film, a bourgeois couple Hélène (Catherine Frot) and Paul (Vincent Lindon), hurried and uncommunicative leaves home for a dinner (Thornham 2019, p. 77). On their way driving, they become witness to the fierce beating of a young woman by three men (Figure 2.6). While the young woman cries for help outside the couple's car, Paul locks the car doors immediately. The thugs hit the young woman's head on the front window of the couple's car. Hélène feels hesitant to help or call the police; but Paul is very convincing on ignoring the whole event without getting involved. Next, we see the couple in car wash to get rid of the blood and evidence of this extreme violence a young woman faces on streets in the middle of a night.

Figure 2.6: Noémie running in the streets towards the couple's car



Source: Colin Serreau (2001), *Chaos*

Thornham calls Paul, “the middle-class Everyman: the kind of guy who is leading the world”, whose seemingly peaceful and strictly planned world is disrupted by a stranger's “unruly and blood-extracting” body encountered in the middle of the night (Thornham 2019, pp. 79-81). Soon the audience understands that the woman beaten by the thugs is an immigrant prostitute forced to sex. While Paul tries to ignore what has

²⁰ *Chaos* won Audience Award in Norwegian FF (2002) and Most Promising Actress Awards in Cesar Awards and Lumiere Awards (2002). For more information, please see: *IMDB*, 2020, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0265116/awards?ref_=tt_awd [accessed 17 September 2020].

happened throughout the film, Hélène, with guilt, commits herself to the recovery of the prostitute, Noémie (also known as Malika, played by Rachida Brakni). As the two women become friends, Hélène decides to help Noémie save herself from forced prostitution. In an adventurous state and solidarity, they fight with Noémie's enemies. While both women getting closer, Hélène grows distant from her husband and son, and their arrogant, ruthless attitude. Therefore, Paul's encounter with this "woman to ignore" turns his life upside down. Thornham calls Noémie "a chaotic force" who disrupts the city's order, with its separation of classes, races and institutional spaces (p. 81). Similarly, Herbeck (2012, p. 904) puts the situation as follows:

In articulating a seeming utopia made by and for women, Chaos addresses a societal problem that remains ignored or at the very least under-represented by the mainstream entertainment industry; gender inequality and, in particular, since the women are mixed group of Maghrebi and Caucasian decent, transcultural gender inequality.

Unlike Noémie, Hélène is a white post-feminist woman who has it all, possessing a businessman husband, a student son, a profession as lawyer, a perfectly ordered house and social life (Thornham 2019, p. 81). Nevertheless, Hélène risks her relationship with her powerful businessman husband, and her own job while striking up her relationship with Noémie/Malika. As Noémie recovers; she regains her body, her voice and her power. Similarly, Hélène is empowered to escape from her invisible prison, her home. Both female characters experience a self-transformation and their encounter becomes a life-changing event for both. Hélène transforms herself from a passive dedicated, unhappy housewife to beholder of her decisions, while Noémie transforms herself from a victim of sex circle, to a rich runaway at the end of the film. More importantly, they form a bond of trust and friendship with each other against the whole world.

Thornham (2019) underlines that patterns of exploitation and violence against women are repeated across divisions of age, class and race through the film *Chaos*. Noémie/Malika is a strong Algerian immigrant who escapes forced arranged marriage, rape, drug addiction and forced prostitution. Noémie is motivated to save her younger sister from a similar fate. Although rich and educated, Hélène is portrayed like a houseworker, or rather slave, whose roles in such a distant family is deduced to organizing, ironing, or problem-solving. Similarly, Hélène's mother-in-law is ignored

and left to a kind of elder loneliness by her son. All female characters break with their subservient states with solidarity at the end of the film.

Furthermore, in terms of space and gender, it might be stated that the interior spaces such as the apartments, hotel and hospital rooms, or the house in the country where Noémie is locked in for weeks and raped by many, render women vulnerable to male power. Similarly, the hotel room where Paul's mother stays alone makes the old woman deeply depressed.

Finally, Hélène's home is an imprisoning place, where it is expected to solely do the housework for her son and her husband. Likewise, in the outside spaces, like streets, women are abused, beaten, displayed or ignored. On the other hand, as Thornham recognizes, in "liminal spaces of the city" such as stairwells, alleyways or subways, women's invisibility becomes a source of power. There, female characters might apply disguise, feminine masquerade or forms of performativity that help them to overturn the established power structures (Thornham 2019, pp. 82-83).

In short, issues related to class, gender, race differences as well as gendered violence are very well compressed in the film. *Chaos* (2001) also very well demonstrates Simmel's comments on the *blasé* attitude. The mid-aged typical middle-class white bourgeois family ignores an extreme violence like a daily ordinary event. The film demonstrates the rushed, uncommunicative nature of urban experience both in the family structure and among the urban crowds on the street level. On the other hand, such a *blasé* attitude is broken and transformed by women's solidarity in the film, which also reminds a similar theme of a recent film *The Unknown Girl* (2016)²¹ by the Dardenne Brothers.

In *The Unknown Girl*, again, an immigrant prostitute running away from some men knocks an idealist female doctor's clinic late at night, but the doctor ignores the buzz

²¹ The film is nominated to Palme d'Or in Cannes FF (2016), Best Foreign Film in Cesar Awards (2017), Best French Language Film in Lumière Awards (2017), Best Film in Miami FF (2017); won Audience Award in SESC Film Festival, Brazil (2018). *IMDB*, 2020, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4630550/awards?ref_=tt_awd [accessed 10 September 2020].

because it is outside working hours. Subsequently, the doctor (Jenny Davin, played by Adèle Haenel) discovers that a teenage woman died short after ringing the door and the camera footage shows that the young girl was in a very desperate situation. Out of guilt, Jenny decides to find out the dead woman's identity in order to prevent her being buried as no one. Jenny also puts herself in dangerous situations but does not step back from digging the case. As the unknown girl's story slowly uncovers, the doctor gets more determined to follow up. Pursuing her own investigation, it is revealed that many people turned their backs to this teenage girl and the doctor finally faces a story of violence and forced sex of an underage immigrant prostitute, whose identity and age was changed in a fake passport.

In a way, in both films, a gendered solidarity breaks the *blasé* attitude and rushed schedules of the city life, which are put aside after these encounters. Both films demonstrate that streets are in fact very dangerous places for young immigrant females, while the white bourgeois post-feminist characters, "who have it all", regret ignoring this gendered violence, decide not to turn away from the incidents, follow up the cases and also transform themselves on their journey to help these immigrant female sex workers. It can also be claimed that, without the white bourgeois acquaintances, the immigrant female sex workers' lives would perish, or their voices would not be heard. Both films propose a gendered solidarity across social classes against patriarchal power relations and the night in the city is the setting of these female characters' encounter.

As suggested by many, today relations between gender and the urban environment are more dynamic than before. In current feminist research, the city is no longer the sole object of study, instead, the urban environment is approached as the context within which gender identities and gender relations are negotiated. Campaigns such as "Take Back the Night"²² or "Slutwalks"²³ are popular recent urban protests, where all gender

²² *Take Back the Night* is a worldwide movement to stand against sexual violence, especially violence against women. The protests are about women not feeling safe walking down the street alone at night. The protests aim to end sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual abuse, and all forms of sexual violence *Take Back The Night Foundation*. 2020. <https://takebackthenight.org/about-us/> [Accessed 20 September 2020]

²³ *SlutWalk* is a transnational movement calling for an end to rape culture, including victim blaming and slut shaming of sexual assault victims. In general terms, the protests are against explaining or excusing rape by referring to any aspect of a woman's appearance. The walks started after a police officer

identities contest their rights to urban spaces, while also transforming expected gender roles in urban life. Today, feminist geographers work on specifying the spatiality of the social processes that also organize gender (Preston and Ustundag 2005, pp. 221-222).

While dominant gender relations encourage women to stay at home, women's participation to urban life reshapes all social relations too. It is also suggested that by dismissing the public/private dichotomy; new forms of in-between spatiality or so-called "liminal spaces" outside home and workplace are also discovered where women's experiences are particular, distinct or more powerful (Preston and Ustundag 2005, p. 219; Moore-Milroy and Wismer 1994, p.71). In a way, similar to new gender research, rather than merely focusing on uplifting women's position to men or focusing on the "lacks", the particularity of gendered experience of the spatial is methodologically preferred.

Although struggled to be broken, still many gender identities face obstacles to access certain urban areas. Surely, urban experience is not always tranquil, leisured and free. It is known that the urban space involves sexual harassments, rape, fear and danger for women, especially at nights. Women are twice as likely as men to report feeling unsafe even though men are far more likely to be the victims of crime in public spaces (Wekerle 2000, p. 47). Women's fear in public spaces has many sources, but it relates first and foremost to social constructions of femininity and masculinity and expected gender roles (Preston and Üstündağ 2005, p. 220). In general terms, urban environment perpetuates gendered experiences of male dominance and female subordination (Crinnon 2013, p.34).

As Rose (1993) points, a feeling of spatial freedom could only be enjoyed and projected by white heterosexual white men, since in general space might only invoke violence, horror, brutality or fear for other genders. Rose states that "sexual attacks warn women every day that their bodies are not meant to be in certain spaces". The events of the everyday, especially at night, are bound into power structures that limit and confine women (Rose 1993).

suggested that "women should avoid dressing like sluts" as a precaution against sexual assault *Wikipedia*. 2020. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SlutWalk> [Accessed 14 September 2020]

Rape culture is another recent phenomenon that emerged after the 1970s. Until the 1970s, rape was viewed not as a social problem but as an isolated act between the perpetrator and the victim. Today, rape is approached as a socially and culturally produced problematic, that is associated with various institutions that support such behaviors, or with cultural forms that normalize aggressive male and passive female figures as a form of sexual fantasy (Williams 2017, p.1).

In “rape culture” every woman is not a victim, nor every man is a perpetrator; but a discursive power works actively blaming women’s bodies to be at the wrong place in the wrong hour. Like a Foucauldian power structure, violence or threat of violence seems invisible, but is felt, which render a woman’s presence in public spaces harder. Such a culture of fear sustains masculinization of the streets and public spaces (Schick 2016, p.100).

The rape culture is also linked with female’s morality or social responsibility. Women are both expected to control the so-called “natural aggressiveness” of men, as well as expected to restrict their own freedom, choices or mobility in order to prevent the incidents to happen. Furthermore, it is a culture of fear for women, where a sense of restriction is internalized on how to lead their lives (Williams 2017, p.3). Additionally, rape culture is linked with various cultural texts; from news that blame the victims, to films, or pornography that reproduce certain stereotypical images of females subordinate to male figures.

Historically, rape narratives function at various levels in a society too. Projanski underlines that rape narratives operated historically to define the masculine familial subject as well as structure women’s relationship to love, family, and the law. Rape narratives also produce masculine spectatorial pleasure predicated on illicit (violent) sexuality (Projanski 2001, p.7).

Rape narratives are also widespread in cinema. Categorized under the name rape and revenge sub-genre, many films have implemented rape incidents with subsequent revenge actions as character motivations. Brick (2012, p.94) highlights that until the

1970s, female characters were defined in relation to males, where their rapes were avenged by male figures. After the 1970s, rape-revenge narratives were more coded with feminist premises, where the avenger was taken by the female characters themselves ²⁴.

Projanski (2001, p.30) emphasizes that women are often vulnerable in rape films because chiefly two types of narratives are common:

...those that depict women's vulnerability as leading to rape and those that depict the rape of an independent woman as making her vulnerable. Paradoxically, the first set of texts suggests that women should be more self-sufficient and independent in order to avoid rape, while the second set of texts suggests that independent behavior and sometimes independent sexuality can lead to rape. In both cases, however, most narratives resolve the paradox between vulnerability and independence by providing a conclusion that successfully incorporates the woman into a stable heterosexual family setting.

Three rape narratives are worth to mention here in order to exemplify the paradoxical relationship between vulnerability, independency and rape: *Irreversible* (Gaspar Noé, 2003), *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1992) and *Baise-Moi* (Despentes and Trin-Thi, 2000). In these three films, rape incidents take place in public spaces and perpetuated by random strangers. These three films also demonstrate very well hints on the rape culture that shapes the urban life. In the first film, *Irreversible*, the avenger is taken by the victim's boyfriends but directed towards the wrong guy. In a way, in the film a kind of male anger turns to an uncontrolled enrage. The latter two films are road narratives with female buddies -which will be discussed more detailed since they have female protagonists- where a similar uncontrolled rage is directed towards men and patriarchal culture in general. Anyhow, the rape incidents shape all these films' narrative structures.

Surely, one of the famous scenes of rape in film history belongs to Gaspar Noé's remarkable and daring film, *Irreversible*. The film attracted significant attention with its long single take rape scene that takes place in a subway underpass, which lasts almost 9 minutes and ends with brutal beat up of Alex (Monica Bellucci). After having an

²⁴ One of the most popular and now cult rape and revenge film, *I Spit on Your Grave* (Zarchi, 1978) has been a point of reference by leading critical discussions on the gender representation of the avenging female protagonist. The film has an avenging female protagonist who punishes the men for their sexual crimes in a sexual way (Brick 2012, p.94).

argument with her boyfriend, Alex leaves a party and short after she is raped by a pimp she randomly encounters while heading to her apartment alone at night. Aiming to cross the road, Alex takes an underpass and there she confronts a fight, taking place between a pimp and a transvestite. Shocked by the moment, Alex hesitantly stops and becomes the new target of the pimp. Alex is raped and beaten real time in front of the screen with a single shot.

In *Irreversible*, just being at the wrong place at a wrong time with a sexy skinny outfit incites the rape event. In addition, Alex's independent behavior, her leaving off the party besides her friend's warnings on unsafety of the city is emphasized before the incident. Mitchell (2003) recognizes that such choices of the director, makes the film a bit "irresponsible", that inadvertently provokes the audience to make statements that the character even invited the rape. Alex's being alone on the streets at night, wearing only a skinny and sexy party dress and the reverse chronology that has already revealed her bloody body hints that she is entering a danger zone at the beginning of the rape scene. In addition, the tracking shot of the camera holds a position of "stalking", an eye following the character from behind, while entering the underpass (Keesey 2010, p. 97). All these elements leave the audience in an ambivalent position whether to emotionally identify with the victim or follow a stalker's perspective.

Certainly, in *Irreversible*, the city is portrayed as a dangerous, transgressive, destructive and chaotic place. Usage of shaky and dizzy camera movements, which Mitchell (2003) calls "crystal meth vision", enhance the chaotic state of the urban landscape. Furthermore, the director chooses smokey underground gay / sex clubs and dark corners of the city as settings of the film. The streets are full of drug sellers, prostitutes and criminals. In this dangerous setting, Alex as an independent, elegant and sexy woman simply becomes a victim. Furthermore, although her dangerous situation in the underpass is witnessed by two different people, no one gets involved with the event in this chaotic and dangerous city. Alex is certainly vulnerable, and the vulnerability of the character is linked with her independency in the rape narrative.

Finally, the film exposes a general male anger through the first half of the film. The pimp rapes and kills Alex because he can. Furthermore, Alex's boyfriend Marcus (Vincent Cassell) is in an uncontrollable rage but without correct motivations. Erensoy (2017, p.135) recognizes that Marcus is angrier at himself, and his motivation for revenge is more about repairing his "crushed ego" than about justice for Alex. In a way, the film depicts "the men's world" which is composed of crushed egos, anger, rage, destructiveness and sexual violence.

On the other hand, in *Thelma & Louise* and *Baise-Moi*, the rapes trigger a general rampage towards men by the female characters. Both films have two female buddies on the road, whose rage turns towards men in general incited after a rape incident. Both films can be read as women solidarity films, where the avenger is taken from patriarchy, male sexuality, misogyny and the society that wraps all these relations.

Thelma & Louise, directed by Ridley Scott (1992) is one of the most highly discussed and popular fictional rape narratives (Prajonski 2001, p. 122). The film is a road movie, in which two women, Thelma (Geena Davis) and Louise (Susan Sarandon) set out a weekend trip on their own in order to break from their daily problems for a while. On their way in the very first night, they decide to hang out in a bar, both get drunk, dance and flirt with men. Thelma flirts with Harlan (Timothy Carhart), but as she gets drunk, she decides to leave the place without getting intimate. Harlan follows Thelma while she was having fresh air and attempts to rape her violently in the parking lot. Soon, Louise arrives nearby them, and threatens to shoot Harlan if he does not stop. Harlan stops, but continues yelling and insulting the two women. Because he couldn't get what he wanted, he acts angrily and provocatively. Finally, Louise shoots Harlan, and the two women drive away. In brief, the rape attempt gives new directions to their journey.

The rest of the movie after the incident is set as a road movie. But free mobility of two independent women attracts significant male attention. On the road, the female protagonists face car chases, verbal and physical assaults of men, patronizing boyfriends and husbands, as well as getting beaten by them occasionally. Prajonski suggests that the political power of the film lies on the fact that the film does not isolate one act of

physical sexual assault from various forms of sexualized assaults that pervade women's lives (Prajonski 2001, p. 127).

The film very well demonstrates the rape culture, everyday violence, harassments, male dominance, sexual assaults and threatening implemented by men, both in the household and in public places. The initial assault takes place in a public space, outside a bar's parking lot. The flirtatious attitude of two women getting drunk and dancing, directly incites sexual availability. Furthermore, the mobility of the characters as female buddies and their free-spirited presence in male dominated spaces, such as the roads where truck drivers occupy, lead to nonstop harassments. In that sense, *Thelma & Louise* powerfully acknowledges pervasiveness of sexual assaults. Furthermore, these assaults are portrayed as temporally multilayered; as a past unspeakable memory, probably a rape incident Louise keeps for herself, as a present unavoidable event that Harlan incites as rape, and a future inevitable threat that the truck driver continuously pushes on to female protagonists throughout the film (Prajonski 2001, p.127).

Moreover, the female protagonists do not believe that the law would protect them. In all this spiral of violence, they are convinced that it would be impossible to prove the act of rape in front of law without injuries or solid evidence. The dialogue between Thelma and Louise demonstrates the situation:

*Louise: Just what do you think we should tell them? Just about a hundred people
saw him dancing with you cheek to cheek
Thelma: Tell them he was raping me...
Louise: We don't live in that kind of a world Thelma!*

Surely, in the patriarchal order male interests, values and laws are principal. But interestingly, Thelma as a housewife, and Louise as a waitress, subvert the expectations in this male world (Man 1993, p. 39). Finally, the characters produce active female gazes through resistance to male objectification and dominance. They return their look to Thelma's emotionally abusive husband; the film's law enforcement officers; the harassing truck driver (Figure 2.7); and Harlan, while making them their own spectacles (Cooper 2000, p.285).

Figure 2.7: Thelma and Louise teasing with the harassing truck driver



Source: Ridley Scott (1992), *Thelma & Louise*

With a similar theme, *Baise-Moi*²⁵ also follows two young women on the road; Manu (Raphaella Anderson) and Nadine (Karen Bach), who are both initially involved in prostitution, turn themselves to sex and killing machines while forming a strong female bond along the way. Here again, a banlieue gang rape initiates rage of one the characters, namely Manu. After a long scene of gang rape in a warehouse, Manu explains to her distressed friend that she does not care about the event since she cannot “keep fuckers from coming in”, and they are lucky to survive from such a bad occurrence. Her statement indicates that such sexual assaults or harassments are common to Manu’s life. But, soon after the event, Manu’s brother understands that she might have been raped, and blames Manu for not being able to protect herself and his honor. Tensely and frustrated, Manu kills her brother. In a way, her anger turns towards patronizing patriarchal discourses that surround her. Manu rejects to be a victim, discards his brother’s protection, does not pursue her revenge against the perpetrator, but escapes from the everyday violence she routinely faces and heads to a future unknown.

The other female protagonist of the film, Nadine, is extremely uncomfortable in her home setting too. After an intense argument with her flat mate, she strangles her to death. Both of the characters are at the margins of the society, they feel imprisoned in their houses, meet coincidentally as runaways and hit the road together. Both of the characters in *Baise-Moi* are mobile throughout the film together and they become

²⁵ The film is nominated to Best Feature in Gijon International FF (2000), Golden Leopard in Locarno FF (2000), Bronze Horse in Stockholm FF (2000). *IMDB*, 2020, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0249380/awards> [accessed 11 September 2020].

destructive outlaws like *Thelma and Louise*. The film takes place in lounge time spaces, like hotel rooms, bars, roads and streets. Again, a state of homelessness is emphasized in the film through usage of such settings. As Manu and Nadine unite, they begin to occupy spaces that are normally male dominated and “perpetuate their own desires” within these spaces (Erensoy 2017, p. 169). The characters directly look upon the public spaces and the male figures they encounter along the way. With a femme fatale disguise and performativity, they seduce, have sex with and then kill random men along the way.

Furthermore, the film constructs femininity as a constantly reiterated performance. This performance rejects victimization rather includes a kind of feminine masquerade that cover up their destructive plans on killing men. The characters transform themselves to “killing/fucking machines” who cannot be owned or used (Beugnet 2007 p. 50-51). In this gendered performativity, the female protagonists seduce and kill, do not refrain from objectifying themselves as femininized facades to be looked at, while also return actively their look upon men, making them their own spectacles. Like *Thelma & Louise*, *Baise-Moi* can also be categorized as a female bond film, where the characters walk towards a dead end together, knowing that they cannot get away from all this mess.

To conclude, as discussed briefly, in the abovementioned films, women in public spaces are threatened, assaulted and raped (or attempted to) because of being at the wrong place at a wrong time. In, *Irreversible*, Alex’s sexy skinny outfit and independent behavior provoke the rape. In a way her mobility and life choices are meant to be restricted in this men’s world of rage, anger and destructiveness. In *Thelma & Louise* the two women’s free and flirtish attitude incite the rape; their mobility attracts significant attention, while they return back their looks actively upon men, while making them their own spectacles. Similarly, Manu in *Baise-Moi*, is taken to a warehouse while she was drinking beer and having fun by the seaside with a friend, which had triggered a form of sexual availability for a banlieue gang rape. In the latter female bond films, the female protagonists reject protection of the law or other male figures, their rampage is turned towards men in general and through mobility, they take a journey of self-transformation, empowerment, freedom that also leads to their fatal ends.

2.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Spatiality includes and envelops all social relations, shapes the subjects and their relations with the world, and it is dynamically reshaped by their actions. So far, it is briefly discussed how women are historically associated with the private space, home, domesticity; whereas the urban experience is associated with male citizens' involvement with the city. The city has been habitually conceived as a male space, in which women are either repressed or seen as disobedient marginal presences.

This chapter followed some exemplary female characters of cinema and their experiences in public spaces, especially alone at night, in order to see their share in the right to the city. Taking *flânerie* as a concept of inspiration; female characters' urban involvement has been examined in relation to multifaceted issues such as; gender solidarity, homelessness, freedom of strolling, vulnerability, independence, mobility, gaze (woman as spectacle vs woman as bearer of the look), fear, danger, sexual harassments, transgression, performativity, rape culture and female sexuality.

Female protagonists' participation to the city has transformative effects on the characters in the films *Cléo from 5 to 7* and in *Elevator to the Gallows*, in which the main characters could be labeled as modern *flâneuses*. *Friday Night*, as a more recent example, demonstrates involvement with a chaotic city and discovery of sexuality. All of these characters give a temporal and spatial break to their lives, find ease at the streets. Characters' transformations in their inner worlds are elaborately reflected in each film, through their appearance, through inner speech and through visuality respectively. Streets are not dangerous for these characters; rather they face personal and existential crises during their strolling.

On the other hand, urban experience is not always peaceful, leisured or free for some characters. The violence faced by immigrant female sex workers are exemplified with the films; *Chaos* and *The Unknown Girl*. Here, violence becomes invisible to male characters, but gender solidarity beyond social classes breaks the *blasé* attitude imposed

by the city life. In a way, all female characters transform themselves to visible and heard subjects through gender solidarity.

Finally, violence, rape and sexual harassments are discussed in the final part of the chapter through films; *Irreversible*; *Baise-Moi* and *Thelma & Louise* in which female characters go through rape events in the narration. These films also exhibit insights on rape culture, sexual violence, harassments, male dominance, assaults and threatening implemented by men, both in the household and in public places. In the latter female bond films *Baise-Moi* and *Thelma & Louise*, the anger and frustration incited by rape events turns to a male rampage beyond law through solidarity. The characters refuse to be victims, make the opposite gender their objects and spectacles, while go through a major transformation during their mobility.

3. NIGHT AND THE CITY

3.1 DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF TIME

In her book *Time Travels*, Gros (2005, p.3) describes time as an “excess”, which can never be used as itself, yet is the only resource we cannot give up. Time is not directly manipulable or controllable like an object, but it affects everything, transforms people, objects, processes, events with its relentless passage. Time can only be approached through its *effects* on objects, subjects and matter, which also tends to “obscure and absorb its characteristics and its force as their own”. Time is irreplaceably precious, since it is linked to beginnings, endings, change, movement, simultaneity, limits, living and hence mortality (Gros 2005, pp. 3-4). Time is a force oriented towards future, loaded with a luggage of past, yet stuck in the present.

Time primarily symbolizes a sequential ordering, such as the past, present, and the future; or a day followed by the night. As Hutchings (2015, p.1) recognizes, such an order of temporality is often demonstrated through terms such as “origin, return, speed, acceleration, interruption, continuity, novelty, repetition, sameness, teleology, eternity, and so on”. Time also requires metaphors for definition; it flies like a bird, flows like a river, freezes like instant ice, or grows short, and finally “dims out as death opens his door” (Hunt 2008, p.3). Anyhow, time is never static, instead always represents a dynamism and procession.

Time, like space, is an “organizing principle” in different aspects of our everyday experience, from our working hours to our religious beliefs (Hutchings 2015, p.1). Therefore, it is also a mindset and force that shapes how we perceive the past or the future, or the very ordinary. Although everyone has a direct experience of time, or as Hunt (2008, p.4) puts it; “so we think to have”, it is the dimension of our lives about which there is the greatest philosophical and cosmological disagreement.

Time or temporal change has been approached diversely throughout history. To start with, in Ancient Greece, a distinction between time as *Chronos* and time as *Kairos* was

made. With this, the quantitatively measurable time (Chronos) and the opportune times that are right for action (Kairos) are separated in the philosophical thought. Chronos refers to a sequential and cyclical temporality that is calculable; whereas Kairos signifies exceptional temporalities for action that is beyond one's control. Chronos is similar to what we know as the objective measurable time today; whereas Kairos includes fortunate aspects, possibilities, opportunities or moments of tension to make decisions. In a way, in the latter, potentialities, coincidences or pressures are hidden. Hutchings (2015, p.1) summarizes the difference as follows:

Chronos referred to time as quantitatively measurable duration and was associated with the natural time of the birth–death life cycle of individuals as well as of nature in general. Kairos referred to a transformational time of action, in which the rhythms of natural time were arrested and challenged.

An understanding of time close to Chronos endured. With the emergence of the mechanical clocks in the thirteenth-century, the inception of “modern homogeneous time” replaced traditional, unequal hourly divisions used since antiquity according to daylight (Lim 2009, p. 10). Under the rule of a standardized clock, in instantaneous measurable present become also standard. This modern understanding of homogeneous time become a natural and inconvertible phenomenon after the worldwide adoption of time zones. In short, the division of time into homogeneous units under the rule of clock impacted many aspects in the organization of every life. As Lim (2009, p.10) highlights, from the thirteenth century on:

...the tolling of public time, of church or civic work bells, has been experienced and resisted by workers as a form of time-discipline, a means of controlling and standardizing the regularity, intensity, and length of periods of labor and intervals of leisure. This temporal discipline is perhaps most keenly felt as the pressure of speed.

Modernity always emphasizes the “present”, and approaches the past, the present and the future as controllable units. Such an idea of progress is strictly related to the development of history as a science, that supposes homogeneity of time, creates the potential for “going back and fishing out previously unnoticed events from the river of time and making them central to new narratives” (Hunt 2008, p. 28-29). In a way, the future and the past become calculable functions of the present with this particular understanding of time (Lim 2009, p.13).

From the time of the French Revolution up to the present day, predominant liberal and socialist traditions of western political thought have presumed a linear, progressive account of political temporality. This account takes the pattern of European political, social, and economic development as universal, thereby attributing “backwardness” to those parts of the world that had not undergone similar transformations (Hutchings 2015, p. 3).

In short, with modernity, time and space are imagined to be neutral; the past is imagined as fixed, and future is envisioned as an enclosed realm that can be determined. The modern time consciousness is a means of exercising social, political, and economic control over periods of work and leisure; it obscures the ceaselessly changing plurality of our existence in time; and it underwrites a linear, developmental notion of progress that gives rise to ethical problems with regard to cultural and racial difference (Lim 2009, p.11). As Hunt (2008, p.25) summarizes; several separate but interrelated elements constitute the modern time schema:

As a dimension or background grid, it is assumed to be universal, homogenous, and “deep” in the sense of stretching back very, very far in time. Its meanings are secular and natural rather than divine or supernatural. Finally, it posits a new relationship to the future, which can only be developed once time has been secularized and naturalized. In the new relationship to the future, people come to believe that study of the natural (and social) world will enable them to “make progress,” “get ahead,” “become more advanced,” “make up for lost time,” in other words, gain some kind of control over the passing of time.

Many philosophers tackled subjects on the sequential qualities of time by discussing issues related to history, progress, evolution and politics. Among many, Walter Benjamin and Henri Bergson criticized an understanding of a linear and a deterministic time that can simply be dominated, directed or controlled.

Benjamin criticizes the discourse of progress that signifies a detachment from the past while emphasizing the idea that future is always a better place. In *Theses on Philosophy of History*, Benjamin (1940) connects the present and the past dialectically, and in order to save the present, the past also must be acknowledged and saved. According to Benjamin (1940, p. 256), cultural practices are the treasures of the victors; therefore should be approached with caution and detachment. To him, such treasures that

managed to survive today are not documents of civilization but barbarism, which are carried by the victors of history. Consequently, in order to include the oppressed classes again in the past and the present, the history must be “brushed against the grain” (Benjamin 1940, pp. 256-257). Benjamin highlights that the storm that carries us to the future, which also holds us from facing the facts of the past, is called progress. The angel of the past (*Angelos Novus*) sees the past as one single catastrophe, he wants to awaken the dead and make whole what has smashed, but he cannot resist ‘the storm called progress’ that carries him to the future (Benjamin 1940, pp. 257-258). Benjamin recommends an interruption of a process of historical evolution that is leading to catastrophe and criticizes the linear and homogeneous understanding of time that leads to progress automatically.

On another track, Bergson emphasizes that there is no single time, but there are different experiences of time, and *durée* belongs to a conscious mind that is based on experience, intentionality and memory. Bergson’s *durée* is an experienced time composed of plurality of durations, which are coexisting cacophonously at different rhythms at the present (Lim 2009, p. 13). With this, Bergson also seeks to unsettle discourses on colonialism, or progress that justify themselves on a linear, evolutionary temporal logic and a particular view of history of cultural difference.

In the Bergsonian concept of *durée* the present, past and future are intertwined. Memories are not conserved in the brain, but memory takes place in the present moment, and synthesizes the past and the present with a view of the future. In a way, memories are not reserved in the brain but actualized in time (Ansel-Pearson, pp. 62-65). Bergson defines perception and memory, our modes of access to the present and the past, in operational terms: the present is that which is acting, while the past can be understood as that which no longer acts (Gros 2005, p. 96). Perception, being linked fundamentally to action, is “actual”; and is directed to an awaiting or instantaneous future (Gros 2005, p. 96).

It can be seen that, historically time is approached as circular, linear, abstract, uniform, homogeneous or universal. But the homogeneous division of time into temporal units

that is heading to a brighter future is criticized by Benjamin. The future is not necessarily optimistic for the subjugated identities, who face constant oppression, and the catastrophic present is actually haunted by the dead of the past and yet to be born of the future. In a way, a culture of progress does not contain the history or traumas of the oppressed, rather only writes the victories. Benjamin wants to disrupt such a progressive narrative of history through examining the culture and reminding the stories of the subjugated identities that are continuously oppressed throughout history. Gendered experience in public spaces at nights might be imagined as such an oppressed and subjugated experience that could be tackled and “brushed against its grain”.

Furthermore, as Bergson emphasizes the past, the present and the future are not separate or linear objective entities to be organized, but all are actualizing in the present through experience and intentionality. Therefore, there is no such thing as a linear time movement to be divided, but there are different experiences of time that necessitates a conscious mind, intentionality, memory and experience. For every individual the experience of time may slow down or speed up and such particularity is ineffable.

Besides, time includes the immanent production of a happening and change itself. Time includes alteration, movement, potentiality, possibilities, moments of tension that the Greek definition of Kairos suggests. It also includes “directions of movement that are virtual in the present, laden with potentialities, and that thus have some impetus or force in engendering a future” that is different from what we have now (Gros 2005, p.157). Thus, how we approach and experience time might give to the ways we may reconceptualize identity, politics, culture, and sexual difference (Gros 2005, p. 4). In that sense, time is a force in our lives, and how we understand it shapes our visions on the past, present and the future.

Narrations also require beginnings and endings and plot lines that privilege some elements over others (Hunt 2008, p. 27). In cinema, all causes, and their effects take place in time (Bordwell and Thompson 2010, p.84). Furthermore, character developments or transformations take temporal duration, which also require certain actions in the filmic medium. In this thesis, chance encounters, potentialities hidden in

time, stories of change and becoming are the centralized problematics for the female protagonists who are in public spaces of the city at night. The female protagonists who are in a threshold of their lives, their experiences of time and orientations towards their past, present and future are some crucial questions to be elaborated. Furthermore, how they start their journey in the filmic time and how they end it up is a critical matter to be examined.

In addition, some research problematics this chapter follows in relation to time are also related to the cultural meanings given to nighttime. Therefore, the representation of nightly settings in the urban life, the characters' being in the world in these nightly settings, how they experience the night, how they change in and through the night are elaborated. It is also important to see how the night they are passing through impacts their motivations, actions and change. Some further questions might be: how is the nightly setting reflected by the cinematic medium, what is at risk, at stake while inhabiting the night spaces of the city? What does the passage of time bring to characters, how do they change, become, or be in the world? In order to see what night brings to female protagonists in contemporary cinema, in the next section, definitions of night and the cultural interpretations of night will be elaborated in order to see the particularity of this temporality.

3.2 PARTICULARITY OF NIGHTTIME

"The night is dark and full of terrors..."
Melisandre, Game of Thrones, HBO (2011-2019)

It has been recently emphasized that the concept of night is not simply as a temporal unit that designates the time during which, half of the earth is dark without sunlight, but is also a state of being for both humans and nocturnal species, and a spatial experience with its distinct characteristics. During the nighttime, activities, beliefs, discourses, behaviors, or rituals are differently oriented than the day (Galinier et al 2010, p.819).

This particular experience at night had been historically associated with many ideas, such as fear, darkness, evil, danger, lawlessness, dreams, entertainment or sexuality.

The nighttime might be the interval for concentrated inner thoughts as well as a social space with completely different dynamics from the daytime. Night has its own rhythm; it includes reproduction and gathering energy for the following working day, provides leisure time for one's own and includes sleeping period for the most. It might provide free time, sociality, fun, entertainment as well as it might provoke loneliness, depression, or an introvert heaviness. The nighttime might as well be spent for breaking with the routine of the diurnal activities or revolt against them. The night and darkness are shelter for criminals, monstrous creatures and illicit jobs. In short, compared to the daytime, the night as a temporality provides entirely different potentials and promises to individuals. More than a time zone, the night imposes particular activities, spatial arrangements, norms by itself; and discourses approaching night also change historically. Therefore, approaching the night as a theoretical construct is required to understand its material and substantial impacts on the objects and subjects it inherits.

In general terms, “nocturnity” refers to transformations induced by internal and external physical changes experienced by the human body during the night. Nocturnity also covers issues related to cultural interpretations of the night (Galinier et al 2010, p.819). In a similar vein, “nocturnalization” refers to the ongoing expansion of the legitimate social and symbolic uses of the night (Koslofsky 2011, p.2). Nocturnalisation also includes the expansion of social and economic activity into the night after the subsequent spread of illuminations, which also goes hand in hand with a process of changing religious and modernist discourses (Edensor 2015, p.559).

The night is caused by planetary facts and simply defined as the period that separates all sunsets from all dawns. In their influential study on the anthropology of the night, Galinier et al (2010, p.820) suggest that entire sections of human social life that take place at night are overlooked and the night is approached as a “parenthesis” of society's activities in daytime. The writers propose that night is more than a dimension of time with its particular spatio-temporal domains and arrangements. Therefore, beyond issues related to planetary rotations or approaching night as an objective matter without any impacts, taking night as a theoretical construct or a social phenomenon is fruitful to see its materiality in the society.

In a similar vein, Schnepel (2006, p.124) distinguishes between the qualities of two different types of nights. First, the “real” night is related to the astrological facts such as rotation of the earth, planets or the sun which are beyond human agency. These qualifications of the night are natural and include phases of the moon, duration of the night in different geographies, or components of the night like dusk and dawn. On the other hand, the “other” night, is a socio-cultural matter that is connected to the binary opposition of the day and the night, and their cultural connotations. Mostly, the day is linked with transparency, good, truth, safety, purity, awakening, life; whereas the night is associated with hidden, evil forces, nightmares, deception, illusion, shadows or death. Here, night functions as the half that is hierarchically subsumed or encompassed by the day. In this interconnectedness, the day represents the superordinate norm, whereas the night represents denial, reversal and sometimes transgression of this norm (Schnepel 2006, pp. 126-127).

Such negative cultural connotations of the night have solid religious backgrounds. Primarily, night has been a conceptual metaphor for philosophers to stress and discuss ideas that had been associated with darkness. In the religious texts, the primordial night ends with the creation of light and the world; thus, the distinction between light and darkness also coincides with the distinction between night and day (Bronfen 2013, p.45). As Koslofsky points, all the religious traditions of early modern Europe including Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Jewish, and Muslim, used the night to think about God and humankind, and respectively the good and evil (Koslofsky 2011, p. 9). In the theological texts, the preexisting or beginning is often described as a kind of endless night or a dark void²⁶. In a way, darkness was there first and by itself, and night or darkness was not totally erased but remained during half of the day. In this view, darkness and light, therefore, day and night are seen as complementary and interdependent parts that form a totality together (Schnepel and Ari 2005, p. 153).

Furthermore, during night, because of darkness, our sense of distance and orientation change, objects we meet might become blurred, which can be either fascinating or

²⁶ God said, “Let there be light: and there was light”. “God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night” (Gen. 1, pp. 3–5, cited in Hill 2007, p. 71).

threatening (Bronfen 2008, p. 51). Tales of superstition take place at nights since vampires, ghosts or devils cover themselves in the darkness of the night. Beaumont underlines that the nightwalkers in the medieval and early modern periods seemed “spiritually and socially other” to the respectable citizens and the night was “the domain of felons and demons” (Beaumont 2015, pp. 58-60). In times of widespread superstition and religious fears, darkness was popularly conceived as a realm in which spectral, ungodly forces met (Edensor 2015, p. 560). Darkness still provide negative associations in common phrases such as the “Dark Ages”, “dark forces”, or the “dark side” (Edensor 2013, p. 448; 2015, p. 560).

On the other hand, Foucault (2002, p.125) stresses that after Enlightenment, the concept of night came to designate not the end of a particular day, but in general the end of a period of darkness separating all sunsets from all dawns. By the end of 18th century, the night not only seemed like a new force to distinguish the dark ages, but also seen as a social sphere that is outside the system’s prohibitions and controls (Bronfen 2013, p.18). For instance, as Beaumont recognizes, the Romantics and their descendants, including the Surrealists, approached the night as a positive alternative to the values of transparency and universal visibility promoted by the scientific representatives of Enlightenment. In this sense, the urban night interrupted the ordinary, provided a sphere for alternative activities and gave opportunities for fostering more authentic or marginal identities of the society (Beaumont 2015, p. 696). In a way, “the secret spaces of the night” provided capacities for questioning the utilitarian demands of the Enlightenment (Beaumont 2015, pp. 727-730). Beaumont (2015, p.732) summarizes that:

If the political logic of the Enlightenment, according to Michel Foucault, was ‘subjection by “illumination”’, then the night, along with ‘darkened spaces’ more generally, promised a furtive, surreptitious freedom from this disciplinary regime. Night – a condition at once mundane and otherworldly – was for the Romantics and post-Romantics what Foucault called ‘the negative of the transparency and visibility’ established by the Enlightenment.

Night and day might be imagined as complementary, circular, antagonistic or in binary opposition. As stated before, when compared among each other, the prevailing and dominant concept is the day. Daytime is the period wherein all productive activities and a whole culture of civilization and history is made. In a similar way to what Derrida

would suggest in his method of deconstruction, the seemingly privileged term, the day is hierarchically superior to the night, and therefore the diurnal activities are perceived to be favored compared to the nocturnal ones. However, the ambiguities, interplay and contradictions among the two terms also show how the day is in a way dependent on the underprivileged term, the night. These plays of meanings among the two also provide realms of questioning an entire history of civilization and progress based on sane, dutiful, rational actions of the diurnal. The night might include not the sane, but the dark sides of psyche; not responsibilities or obligations but transgressions, excess, or carnivalesque spatio-temporalities.²⁷

In a similar vein, Schnepel (2006) recognizes that night also provides an ambivalent yet particular time-space conjunction. The nocturnal *chronotope* might provide an alternative or counterpoint to the day. In his definitions, these “hyper nights” provide setting for rebellious and transgressive forms of behavior that question the norms of the day. In this spatio-temporality, what is imposed by the culture and history of the diurnal are suspected or turned upside down. Schnepel also suggests that the hyper nights become heterotopias in Foucauldian sense, where human beings wish to achieve, experience and feel more what the ordinary day provides. Thus, the hyper nights become a setting and a force, to question and criticize the norms superimposed by the society (Schnepel 2006, pp. 132-133).

A similar approach was held by Bryan D. Palmer in his book entitled *Cultures of Darkness*, where he examines many revolutionary and transgressive nights throughout history. Palmer (2000) suggests that the “people of the night” provided an alternative history of opposition, deviancy and transgression that continuously threatened the established order. These people of the night Palmer discussed are the peasants, witches, pirates, slaves, prostitutes, revolutionaries, blues and jazz musicians, beats and the contemporary youth gangs; all of whom used the nightly setting as their spatio-

²⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin examines carnivalesque stories in folk humor and recognizes that there, grotesque bodies; exaggerated bodily protuberances; emphasis on eating and excrement; frequent physical abuse in forms of beatings, a communal perception of life are seen in the carnivalesque. Ambivalence, ridicule and abuse are side by side with praise and celebration. In addition, the carnival decrowns and mocks figures of authority and power, expresses a utopian belief in a future time in which authority is vanished. All is considered equal in the carnival (Morris 1994, pp. 194-195; 199; 207-208).

temporality to question the norms of the culture and capitalism. Linebaugh (2000, p.198) defines the work of Palmer aligning with E.P. Thompson's methodology of "cultural Marxism", whereas Walkowitz (2002, p.340) describes the axis of the study as "Foucault meets Marx", since those who exist in the margins of the society are relocated to the relations of production and exchange, while showing the transgressive responses to and limits of the dominating societies. In a way, Palmer works on an alternative history, like Walter Benjamin would suggest, that "brushes the grains against" in order to show the marginalized and oppressed sections of the society, but this time, the common setting shared is the "night" by all the groups. Here in this thesis, the common setting for the female protagonists of contemporary cinema is the night as well.

This brings us to the discussions on the uncanny and the night. Freud connects night with his concept of uncanny and links the nocturnal side of the psyche with repressed thoughts of diurnal thinking. In his claims, the night also includes the uncanny side of humanity that contains the repressed thoughts of a dark past. Here, the concept of uncanny helps, providing a conceptual space to merge present with individual fantasy and collective imagination (Bronfen 2013, pp. 98-99).

The concept of uncanny has become a widely used figure for the simultaneous homelessness of the present and haunting of the past that has been associated with modernity. The concept is perceived as a fundamental constitutive aspect of our experience of the modern, which in a way, troubles the serene confidence of any explanatory or interpretive framework, it is a force, an *energia* of pushing beyond clearly established boundaries. In a way, the uncanny, similar to night, had become a key term for figuring the uncertainties, tensions and obscurities of modernity itself (Collins and Jervis 2008, pp. 2-5). Therefore, it might be stated that, both the night and the uncanny contain transgressions of the ordinary. And as Beaumont (2015, p.47) suggests, the "nightwalkers bring to light the hidden contradictions both of the class society in which they are condemned to live and their own divided psyches".

Furthermore, there is always an uncanny site of the night in the city. Beaumont (2015, p.26) claims that the city is at its most earthly and unearthly at night because familiar

and routine places acquire a subtly different form and volume at night in the city. The writer works on an alternative history of London at night in 19th century through literary texts and suggests that the nightwalkers represent some of the most suggestive and revealing guides to the neglected and forgotten aspects of the city. In each case he works, Beaumont underlines that the city is revealed as a place divided between work and pleasure, the affluent and the indigent, where the entitled and the desperate cross in the streets. Beaumont (2015, p.29) states:

Who walks alone in the streets at night? The sad, the mad, the bad. The lost, the lonely. The hypomaniac, the catatonic. The sleepless, the homeless. All the city's internal exiles. 'The night has always been the time for daylight's dispossessed', writes Bryan Palmer, '– the deviant, the dissident, the different.' Solitary strolling at night in the city by both men and women has, from time immemorial, been interpreted as a sign of moral, social or spiritual dereliction.

Finally, more positive aspects of the night are linked with leisure. The night mostly provides a time and space when we do not work, and free from the burdens or obligations of the day. The nighttime might be filled with sleep and dreams, or with pastimes, hobbies, or outside the house pursuing entertainment, dancing, drinking, or getting wasted; and last but not the least, nights are mostly the setting for marital or illicit sexual activities (Schnepel 2006, p. 127).

Bronfen (2013) discusses the cultural representations of the night in literature and film. Besides being a conceptual metaphor for philosophical discussions, the nightly settings might function as the stage for dreams, creativity, hallucinations, or a site for moral struggle between good and evil. She also recognizes that in cultural texts, night might be the setting for a discovery of the limits of certainty and self-knowledge. Taking the night and merging it to the next day might awake self-recognition and in a way transformation (Bronfen 2013, pp. xiii-xiv). The writer suggests that night provides sites of passages and transitions for the self in narrative and cinematic texts. It is more used as an element that provides an idea that “a journey into the night is a journey to the end of a night, from which we wake up in a day that has been changed because of this passage” (Bronfen 2013, p.22). Bronfen (2013, p.21) adds that:

*Because the night gives birth to dreams, it discloses secret aspects of the self.
Because it evokes death, it triggers yearning for redeeming soul from the body.
Because it promises erotic ecstasy, it can express the happiness or violence that
emerges from a passionate encounter with another...*

To conclude, night is more than a temporal unit but is a particular spatio-temporality with its specific sensory requirements, night spaces, night activities, and cultural connotations. Within this multiplicity of meanings, female protagonists' relationship to night might be diverse as well. It might be the shelter and cover for the monstrous, seductive or criminal females, a necessity for survival of vampires, or a social space for the prostitutes. Night might provide veils to night stalkers, as well as to male harassers, while it might provide spaces of leisure and hang out for those who are searching for "nights of drunken excess and indiscipline" (Koslofsky 2011, p.5). Finally, night is the temporality for criminal activities, illicit jobs or revolutionary organizations. In short, nights include excess, transgression, deviancy or hallucinations. This thesis approaches the nightly setting as a central requirement for the analyses in order to see the female protagonists' relationship to city and the night in contemporary cinema.

3.3 NIGHT & THE CITY AND ITS GENDERED PARTICULARITY

As discussed in the previous section, the night is much more than a time of the day. With the coming of night, night spaces arrive as well. Although night is a natural phenomenon, night spaces are socially constructed. They contain social relationships as well as connote multiple meanings just like the concept of night does. However, as Robert Williams (2008) highlights, night spaces are neither uniform nor homogenous, rather they are constituted by social struggles about "what should and should not happen in certain places during the dark of the night" (Williams 2008, p. 514).

The night life in the city, the so called nocturnalization of social life, accelerated with the invention of lightings and illuminations at nights. The discovery of artificial lighting had been influential on working in multiple shifts, as well as it gave greater stimulus to the nighttime entertainment industry during the 19th century. With the help of the lantern lights and the expansion of electric lighting, the city space dynamics transformed completely (Melbin 1978, pp.3-4). As Beaumont (2015) recognizes, until

the street lighting became common, there was always an element of danger at night and the criminals who broke laws after dark, could be killed on spot. Edensor (2013) summarizes that in the absence of light, it was difficult to distinguish between friends and foes since the dark night was the domain of the “other” such as the burglars, gangs, criminals, robbers or rapists. The night was the setting for the occult myths too. In general, the pair of night and darkness is imagined as a dangerous realm, and often approached with nyctophobia (Edensor 2013, pp. 448-449).

Nonetheless, today, the nighttime might be as lively as the daytime, especially in cosmopolitan cities. Particularly by the 1980s, the nights of the cities become as lively and dynamic as the days. Until the 1990s, the night was widely considered as a dead time with little economic potential (van Liempt et al 2014, p. 6). Murray Melbin (1978, p.5), as a frontier of night studies, summarizes what we call the “nighttime economy” of society as follows:

Today more people than ever are active outside their homes at all hours engaged in all sorts of activities. There are all-night supermarkets, bowling alleys, department stores, restaurants, cinemas, auto repair shops, taxi services, bus and airline terminals, radio and television broadcasting, rent-a-car agencies, gasoline stations. There are continuous-process refining plants, and three-shift factories, post offices, newspaper offices, hotels, and hospitals...There are many emergency and repair services on-call: fire fighters, auto towing, locksmiths, suppliers of clean diapers, ambulances, bail bondsmen, insect exterminators, television repairers, plate glass installers, and funeral homes.

In addition to increased economic activities and expansion of night shift jobs, today, the nighttime of the city has its own certain aesthetics too. The city has a different phantasmagoria at night, with gigantic advertising boards, city lights, store illuminations as well as has its dark corners, silence tunnels or wrecked passageways. The city at night provides spheres for the marginal or illicit jobs as well. Peripheral dark corners of the city become spots for the houseless, while the city at night also is the setting for those who have exiled themselves from the day. In addition, the night in the city is the setting for detectives, investigators, or avengers who are searching for the unlawful misfits (Beaumont 2015, p.848). Edensor (2015, p.561) underlines that these dark corners of the city at night also provide some sort of fascination and simultaneous fear, because they might offer a time for meeting people you should not, or offer an occasion “for doing things your parents told you not to do”.

Christine (Sand MCléod) in Bette Gordon's *Variety* (1983)²⁸ exemplifies such a female stalker who is tempted to wander in the dangerous and male-dominated corners of the city like a detective both fascinatedly and fearfully. As a jobless and broke young ex-teacher and want-to-be writer, Christine takes a night job as a ticket seller in the front desk of a porn movie theater. After a while, Christine grows interest in the porn movies in the theater, listens to moans of the soundtracks during her cigarette breaks and snitches to watch scenes of the porn films when she has chances to be unseen. During her desk time, she also starts examining the theater's audience profile. One day, a well-dressed middle-aged regular customer, Louie (Richard M. Davidson) likewise recognizes Christine and asks her to go to a football game together. In a flirtatious manner, they drive to the football match. In the middle of the game, while they were laughing and having champagne, their date is interrupted by an urgent call. Louie leaves the ball game immediately, while Christine starts trailing back Louie through the dark corners of the city secretly at nights. Chasing Louie, Christine discovers the porn shops, sex underworld, fish markets, periphery motels, and the bridge under ways where the dirty negotiations are held.

Christine's new nighttime job, her involvement with the dynamics of this male-centered workplace- the porn theater-, her interest in Louie and her discovering of Louie's ties to mafia, to illicit nighttime economy, as well as her explorations on the world of sex toys, porn magazines, porn films, other female bodies in those films and magazines, all trigger a thorough change in the character. In and through the night, the female protagonist both realizes the dark corners of the nighttime economy as well as dark corners of her sexuality and psyche. In a way, through this journey Christine's sexuality awakens as well. Furthermore, her writer skills improve in a divergent path as she starts making up fantastic sexual stories or describing the scenes of porn films in detail to her friend. In time, the distant, mafioso man, Louie, turns being a sexual attraction for Christine too. The audience is left ambivalent whether she wants to unveil the dirty connections of Louie like a public heroine detective or restore back his attraction again.

²⁸ The film is nominated to Golden Camera in Cannes FF (1984). *IMDB*, 2020, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0090251/awards?ref_=tt_awd , [accessed 23 October 2020].

In Christine's life, there is also a group of female friends she often meets at nights in the pubs. During these meetings, these young women talk about the economical struggles, job opportunities, gendered mobbing or harassments they face during their battles to live in a cosmopolitan city alone. Jhirad (1985, p.44) describes these women as living on "the margins the of low-life (as strippers, waitresses in cheap bars, prostitutes... etc.)" whose occupations in the nighttime economy are quite gendered and open to recurrent sexual harassments. For instance, Christine tells that once she applied to a job stating, "a publicity person needed", but during the application the man asked her to show her breasts in the backroom. After Christine refused to do so; the person yelled after her; stating "they are too small anyway".

In another occasion, her dancer / stripper friend tells Christine how she got busted to policemen who insisted to go to a hotel room after a dance show. Although the dancer refused to go, her friend accepted the request and they both ended up in the jail. The stripper complains that those prints, shots, and 22-hour jail will haunt her life forever even if she finds a decent job, since those records will come up anyway.

In another conversation, Nan (played by Nan Goldin²⁹) whines that she has a very boring job as a waitress in a pub instead of being able to pursue her dreams of being a photographer. Nan advises Christine not to let "those creeps in the workplace to get to her", since they are everywhere, even in the bar she works. In addition to such mobbing and recurrent harassments, the female group also chat about the men they date and their attitude towards them. In a way, these odd yet humorous stories are contrasted with the harsh patriarchal order they are fighting and through dialogue and gendered solidarity they break with the ordinary violence they face, or they kind of share their burdens. Constant mobbing or harassments are these women's ordinary. In the film it is suggested that the precarious female jobs of the nighttime economy that are set in the social spheres dominated by men provide a constant edge of gendered violence to these women. Consequently, the film portrays the risks of available temporary jobs in the nighttime economy, and their gendered risks as a back story.

²⁹ Nan Goldin is an American photographer famous with her works on LGBT & gay subculture, lives of sex workers, HIV communities, and post-punk, new wave music bands.

Likewise, Christine has hesitations about her job. She keeps convincing herself that she is just selling tickets, but a feminine presence in such a hormone dominated male environment attracts significant attention. Christine is both irritated and yet fascinated with her job and the world it prevails. She is an object to be looked at and still an active gaze experiencing and looking back to the city and those male dominated spaces (Figure 3.1). She wears make-up, dyes her hair, looks back to the clients, jumps into the sex shop nearby and wanders therein. Instead of being passive, she actively engages with the city and the night. Furthermore, she hides under the veil of darkness during her stalking of Louie. Christine investigates the connections between the mafia and the unions like an objective journalist, as well as investigates her feelings towards Louie, her inner arousals and hidden corners of her sexuality simultaneously. Therefore, her experience of the city at night is both personal and distanced, containing elements of an active observer subject and a passive gendered object to be observed instantaneously.

Figure 3.1: Christine being a gendered object to be looked at in the sex shop



Source: Bette Gordon (1983), *Variety*

The cabinet Christine is stuck during her working hours is a very limited space that she can hardly move. Instead, the city is wide open in front of her eyes. Furthermore, Christine does not have a clear future orientation, she is alienated and feels stuck in life similar to the limited space of the cabinet she is selling tickets. But she breaks with all these by actively occupying the city at night and inhabiting the nighttime spaces of the city of her own. Christine provides another example to the gendered experience of mobility in male dominated spheres and to “woman as spectacle” and “woman as active bearer of the look”.

The film also portrays the city with neon lights, traffic jams and dark corners (Figure 3.2). Nan Goldin shoots the still images of the city for the film. From her perspective, the city is similar to neo-noir films' aesthetics; dark, wet and filled with multiple stimuli that everyone keeps ignoring. These insert footages on the city also contain close ups to fish containers in the fish market, or fried chickens displayed in the food stores in the Chinese neighborhood. Christine looks upon these flesh actively too as if comparing themselves, the female figures of the cosmopolitan nighttime economy or porn business with those meats which are displayed and are at the service of male dominance.

Figure 3.2: The city at night with neon lights



Source: Bette Gordon (1983), *Variety*

To conclude, in *Variety*, the city at night is not providing safety or fun to female characters who work in precarious jobs, compared to the males who consume them. The city is the setting for illicit and dirty jobs; as Christine puts it; at the end of the day, she is selling “dirty tickets to dirty customers”. Furthermore, in this setting the nighttime economy provides gendered mobbing to those who hold temporary works for male entertainment industry. At this level, the film intermingles psychological (personal) and social (structural) conditions of the characters by presenting their multilayered stories on gender.

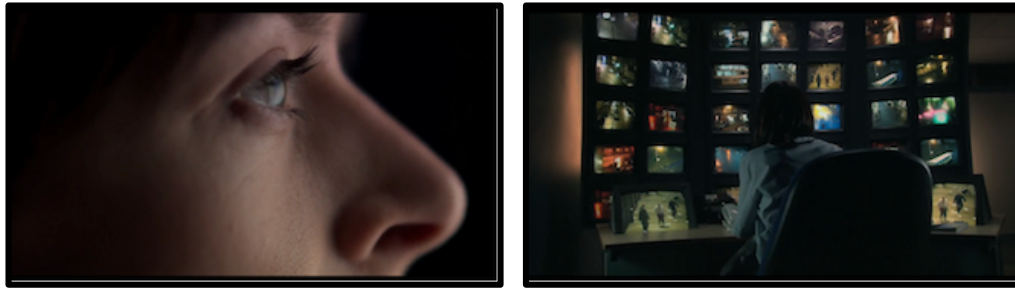
Yet the film is more on Christine's personal psychological transition and sexual awakening. Christine is an ambivalent and unusual character who is in a threshold in her life, who has moved to a cosmopolitan city with big dreams yet ended up working in a porn theater. Rather than creating a drama of victimization, or relying on emotional turbulences of the characters, Christine's feelings are not clear, she is confused and her reactions to what she is going through are unpredictable. Similarly, her wanderings in

the city like a flâneuse contain such ambivalences. Like a flâneuse she follows a random stranger, follows a random thread that leads to unexpected ends. She actively investigates, follows and the audience observes the city from her perspective. In contrast, the female protagonist is clearly an object to be looked in the male dominated spheres, and yet an active observer who is looking, observing and discovering. She is a desired object and a desiring subject, as much as she is a harasser and someone to be harassed. In this sense, the film portrays a particular and personal gendered character with contradictions, who is wandering with curiosity at night in the city.

Jackie (Kate Dickie) in Andrea Arnold's *Red Road* (2006)³⁰ is another female stalker character who wanders in the city alone, but this time Jackie has an omnipotent power of seeing and observing the city. Working as a CCTV camera operator, Katie examines Glasgow streets for hours as her profession. Katie can zoom in, follow-up actions, she can see multiple corners, streets at once from a secure distance. Katie mostly follows females to see if they are in danger in dark corners, or in need of any help. She has the power of calling police immediately and protect the crime before it happens when she sees any threat of danger or violence. This time a whole city at night is watched continuously and professionally by a female supreme eye, and her gaze is used as an apparatus of power in every sense of the word (Figure 3.3). In short, Jackie as the "Peeping Tom" owns a privileged, secret, one-way gaze that treats onscreen bodies as objects of voyeuristic pleasure (DeFalco 2018, p. 697).

³⁰ The film won Best Film, Best Director, Best Actor in a Scottish Film, Best Actress in a Scottish Film and Best Screenplay in BAFTA Awards, Scotland (2006). Also won, Jury Prize and nominated to Palme d'Or in Cannes FF (2006). Won Best Actor in British Film Institute Awards (2006); FIPRESCI Prize in Miami FF (2007); Best Actress in Montreal Festival of New Cinema (2006); Best First Time Director in Philadelphia FF (2007). *IMDB*, 2020, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0471030/awards?ref=tt_awd [accessed 23 July 2020].

Figure 3.3: Jackie's eye and the multiple screens observed simultaneously



Source: Andrea Arnold (2006), *Red Road*

In this routine job, Jackie has characters to follow-up, such as the man with his old dog, or the cleaner woman dancing and cleaning the office floors. Jackie is fascinated to observe people from a distance, she is aroused watching people having sex at dark corners or gets sad when the old dog gets sick the other day. A part of the whole city is wide open in front of her eyes and she is charmed to see the flow of life. She occasionally sighs to what she sees or gets excited at times when she quickly plays with the remote control to follow up the actions from streets to streets. Occasionally, her mediated vision through screens merges with real life, she recognizes people on streets when she is walking. Without talking she continues observing them with her fresh eyes and grows sympathy towards them. In short, Jackie has a double vision on the city; as a panoptic eye; seeing without being seen and as a citizen walking through people down on the ground and examining their unmediated versions in real life. Burke (2007, p.185) defines this double vision as an “intense feeling of uncanny” since the editing of the film cuts into to the real-life spaces after we see them on hitherto through the screens. Meanwhile, Fuller (2007, p.71) states that Jackie’s subjectivity is “compulsively voyeuristic” and coopting a male gaze with the extensive emphasis on screens cutting to the close-ups of her eyes and gestures.

One night, Jackie gets irritated when she follows up a man on screen in the Red Road Blocks³¹, a social housing area for the disadvantaged segments of the populations. Soon, Jackie starts stalking the man with her double vision; both through camera and in

³¹ The Red Road towers of Glasgow were the tallest residential buildings in Europe when they were built as social housing in the 1960s. All buildings are demolished by year 2015 in order to regenerate and gentrify those areas of the city.

real life. Her excitement is prevailed as she follows the actions of the man from one screen to the other, as much as from one pub to another party in real life. Eventually, she meets with the man, Clyde (Tony Curran), and after multiple encounters one night they have sex, but Katie reports Clyde for rape. By the end of the film, it is revealed that Clyde was released earlier and actually killed Jackie's daughter and husband in a car accident six years ago. Clyde was under drugs and alcohol when his car crashed on Katie's family in a bus stop. Through the end of the film, Jackie drops the charges against Clyde with acceptance and forgiveness; and finally says goodbye to the ashes of her daughter and husband, which were kept at home with Jackie for the past six years.

As Watkins (2015, p.103) underlines the female protagonist of *Red Road* "invokes and unsettles the alignment of femininity and emotion, and thereby the image of woman familiar to classic cinema". Jackie transgresses her role as an official surveillance officer who is in a privileged position to collect information behind Clyde's back for vengeance. She also transgresses expected gender norms from a mourning mother and wife, since she experiences attraction, sensual arousal and finally orgasm during the set-up sex to blame Clyde for rape. Her emotions are unbalanced, because they contain fear, anxiety, curiosity, distance and intimacy at once. As Thornham (2019, p.72) recognizes, Jackie's revenge does not involve masculinization of the character, but also reflects her embodied sexuality and desire.

From Jackie's perspective, the city is portrayed two dimensional in the film. At one layer, jumping from one screen to the other through her zoom ins and preferences. At this phase, Jackie shows a distanced and objectifying gaze. Close up shots of Jackie's face, of her eye and hand doing the work of surveillance, are intercut with the images she monitors (DeFalco 2018, p.696). In the second layer, she wanders in those places she witnessed through the monitors. While following Clyde, she visits downtown pubs, sits at cafes, wanders in abandoned districts, or attends home parties of strangers. The camera always emphasizes Katie's point of view, and like a flâneuse she examines pubs, waste grounds, stray dogs, teenage girls, or abandoned buildings with graffiti both through camera and with her fresh eyes. Additionally, as DeFalco (2018, p.694) recognizes Katie's surveillance and voyeurism convert into a form of witnessing that

“disrupts the desire for revenge and, perhaps, even inspires forgiveness, suggesting a new and exciting perspective on the transformative power of the gaze”. As DeFalco (2018, p.699) puts it:

... the objectifying gaze of the CCTV cameras no longer serves her longing for vengeance; she has progressed from optic surveillance to haptic intimacy, an intimacy that cannot accommodate revenge. She has encountered Clyde as a subject, becoming his inadvertent witness. She has witnessed the face of the other.

Similarly, as Lake (2010) underlines *Red Road* could be labelled as a “sub-veillance” film rather than a surveillance one, since looking is done from below too, and by a woman. This gendered looking from below is exceptional in cinema. Lake (2010, p.231) suggests that this gender twist in power of looking reverses the dynamics of power and therefore challenge the:

...traditional theories and narratives of surveillance and raise questions about how our individual desires and fears are refracted through the lens to reconfigure space and screens. Red Road exposes the cosy conceptual coupling of male voyeurism and surveillance and, by privileging the ‘haptic’ over the ‘optic’, the voyager over the voyeur, presents ‘sub-veillance’ as fluid and furtive, as an embodied exercise of traversing and transgressing a reoriented digital terrain.

To conclude; similar to Bette Gordon’s *Variety*, another female filmmaker’s film Andrea Arnold’s *Red Road* contain female stalkers following male strangers at nights. Both of the characters observe the city from a distance; Christine in *Variety* from her cabinet and Jackie of *Red Road* from her surveillance screens. Yet both of the characters jump on the streets, actively engage with the city at night, inhabit those places that were examined from a distance once. Both of the characters combine such a discovery with their personal sexual awakenings too. In this sense, they are rich examples that provide a gender twist to power of looking as well as discovery of the self in and through the night.

The urban night provides a ground of expressing desire. Edensor calls it the “second city” which has its own spaces and own set of alternative citizens after the daylight fades. This second city includes libidinal desires, transgressive sexualities, mystical practices as well as entertainment and music (Edensor 2015, p.561). Williams (2008) highlights that because of its transgressive meanings and activities, night and darkness “deterritorializes the rationalizing order of the society” since it provides a setting to

obscure, obstruct or hinder the power technologies of the order, thereby allowing potentially transgressive behaviors under a veil of anonymity (Williams 2008, p. 518).

One good example of a female wanderer of nights exemplifying such transgressive sexuality is Erika Kohut (Isabelle Huppert) in Michael Haneke's *The Piano Teacher*³² (2001). The film tells the story of a single, dedicated, middle-aged piano teacher, who lives with her mother and works in an over-disciplined conservatory. In the household Erika's mother controls every aspect of her life, from her clothes to where to sleep; whereas, in the conservatory Erika reflects her mother's pressures and mindset towards her colleagues and students by being very reserved, punishing and mean. Her life of such a discipline, control, devotion and properness is unsettled when she meets a young and talented man, Walter Klemmer (Benoit Magimel), who wants to be Erika's apprentice after studying engineering. Mutual attraction between the couple soon turns to a sado-masochistic relationship, wherein Erika feels very vulnerable, unbalanced, aggressive and destructive towards herself and others.

Much has been discussed about the psychoanalytic analysis of Erika's perverse sexuality, tormented character, emotional and sexual disequilibrium or her relationship with the young talented pupil, Walter, and her mother-daughter relationship from a Lacanian perspective (Wyre 2005; Thakur 2007; Wyatt 2005). Instead, here, I would like to mention a few critical scenes, where the night and darkness covers Erika's perverse aims and transgressive sexuality. Ma (2010, p.512) describes Erika as both monster and victim, who reveals a side of her persona "incommensurable with her façade of respectability" during her unusual nightly activities of sexual stimulation. Lying her mother that she has rehearsals with a colleague, Erika often wanders in the city all by herself stalking youngsters or visiting sex shops. Unlike her daylight life of strictness and control, at nights she "sexploits" and stalks teens having sex in drive-ins. Under the veil of the night and darkness, she becomes a Peeping Tom searching for

³² The film won Best Actor, Best Actress, Grand Prize of the Jury Awards in Cannes FF (2001); Best Actress in Clotrudis Awards (2003); Best Supporting Actress in Cezar Awards (2002); Best Actress in European Film Awards (2001). For more, see *IMDB*, 2020, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0254686/awards?ref_=tt_awd [accessed 23 November 2020].

sexual pleasure through secretly spying (Figure 3.4). Wrye (2005, p.1208) summarizes Erika's sexual transgression as follows:

Erika Kohut seethes with transgressive passions, equally driven by her own sexual weaknesses and tastes as she is fascinated with those of men. Dressed in a trench coat with tan kidskin gloves, her costume evokes the proverbial pervert. She passes one of her male students on her way into a local sex- shop peepshow booth to sniff ejaculate on discarded tissues left by previous clients; then she voyeuristically spies on a couple having sex in a drive-in until the stimulation so overwhelms her that she squats to urinate by their car.

Figure 3.4: Erika as the peeping tom in the drive-in, urinating by the car



Source: Michael Haneke (2001), *La Pianiste*

On the contrary, during the scene when Erika is in the sex shop, she cannot keep herself anonymous under the veil of darkness. In such a male dominated sphere she immediately becomes the target of male gaze, while she was waiting for the line to watch porn films in a private cabinet. Though she does not have an inciting outfit, nor looks back to the men around, her gender becomes discernable. A female figure (even though she looks cold and serious) having sexual desire attracts significant attention in such a male oriented public space (Figure 3.5). As Ma highlights, the location of the sex shop in a shopping mall also underscores the commodified character of the pleasure Erika seeks, which is the only pleasure available to her given her social isolation (Ma 2010, p. 514).

Figure 3. 5: Erika in the sex shop waiting for the private cabinet



Source: Michael Haneke (2001), *La Pianiste*

As an extraordinary female protagonist, Erika uses the possibilities of night and darkness in order to transgress strictness of her diurnal activities. In fact, Erika's home is quite similar to captivity. Tweraser (2011, p.195) underlines that in the interior plans especially with her mother, the character's imprisonment is solidified with favoring medium shots and close ups to reinforce the idea that the world of the film is like a prison. Similarly, Naqvi and Kone (2010, pp.128-129) emphasize that the opening scene that shows the argument with the mother and daughter prevail the power relationship by:

The opening of the film We are confronted with a medium shot of a closed door from the inside of an apartment. Erika, shown in a medium shot, discreetly opens the door, inches her way in, and carefully closes and locks the door with the safety chain. By doing so, she already signals that there is no way out of this claustrophobic interior and that the spectators will be hostages, forced to witness the ensuing argument between Erika and her mother over the fact that she has returned home late.

Erika's character exemplifies a perversive sexuality, who is destructive to both herself and to others. The pressures of her job and her dominant mother in the household articulate and flow out freely and unrestrictedly at nights. Both the uncanny side of her psyche and her desires unlimitedly express themselves outside the routine and burdens of the diurnal. As Tweraser (2011, p.199) summarizes, her strict and often violent relationship with her mother, the monotony, terror and control attendant to the musical training at the conservatory are broken with the brief moments of "potential transcendence" that are freely flowing out at nights.

The night in the city, likewise, provides potentials for nights of drunken excess and intoxication. At nights, the responsibilities of the sober mind could be put aside, and the city provides spatiality for those who want to hang out or become intemperate. The famous *Hangover* (Philipps, 2009, 2011, 2013) series exemplify such block out minds and loss of temporary memory due to excess alcohol and drugs for male buddies. Recently, a similar theme is narrativized with female protagonists in mainstream Hollywood cinema as well; where female buddies share a night of craze and have fun together. Contemporary examples for such “girls’ night out” films are *Bad Moms*, (Lucas, 2016); *Rough Night*, (Aniello, 2017); or *Girls Trip* (Lee, 2017) wherein female characters hang out in groups and share a night to remember nonetheless, their relationships to city space are not much emphasized and they hang out in groups.

When it comes to unaccompanied female protagonists who get wasted both physically and emotionally at night in the city; two films could be considered further; Fatih Akın’s *Head-On (Gegen die Wand, 2004)*³³ and Sebastian Lelio’s *Gloria (2013)*³⁴. In both of the films, these two female characters pass through the night alone with extensive use of alcohol and drugs, and such an experience has immense effects on their character transformation.

To start with, *Head-On* tells the story of Sibel (Sibel Kekilli) and Cahit (Birol Ünel), both coming from Turkish immigrant families living in Hamburg, Germany. Sibel’s family forces her to live according to their customs, therefore she is motivated to leave her parents’ house in order to pursue a free life of her own; while Cahit lives a very self-destructive intoxicated lifestyle. As a part of an arranged and staged marriage, they start living together in an open relationship. Sibel, finally free from all the familial patriarchal power, starts behaving as she wishes, while Cahit keeps partying, drugs and seeing his ex-lovers. Unexpectedly, an attraction and jealousy grow between them and they fall into each other. Subsequently, Cahit kills one of Sibel’s ex-lovers in a pub

³³ The film won Golden Berlin Bear and FIPRESCI Awards in Berlin Int. FF (2004). The film has 25 awards and 14 nominations, for more, please see *IMDB*, 2020, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0347048/awards?ref_=tt_awd, [accessed 2 November 2020].

³⁴ The film won Silver Berlin Bear for Best Actress in Berlin Int. FF (2013). The film has 19 wins and 16 nominations in various international film festivals, for more, please see https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2425486/awards?ref_=tt_awd, [accessed 2 November 2020].

fight out of jealousy, goes to jail, and Sibel flees to Istanbul in order to get rid of her brother's pressures and to start over again. Sibel's Istanbul days pass with alcohol, drugs and getting misused. In the final episode of the film, several years after, Cahit and Sibel meet again in Istanbul, but decide to go their separate ways.

The film has an episodic structure cut with musical interludes, showing the band *Selim Sesler* performing a Turkish song in front of a postcard-impression setting of Istanbul (Berghahn 2011, pp. 248-249). The episode in Istanbul mostly focuses on Sibel's story of survival and alienation in a new setting. In Istanbul, Sibel's character twists to who Cahit was in Hamburg; she becomes a self-destructive heavy drinker (Berghahn 2011, p. 247) and gets wasted at nights in pubs and streets in order to get rid of all the burden she has been carrying. One night, knocked-out in the middle of a pub after getting drunk, Sibel is raped by the bartender after she passed out. Out of the bar, the enraged Sibel encounters a group of young men who are assaulting her. Sibel provokes and shouts back to them as equals, and finally beaten and stabbed almost to death. After this sequence of the film, it is understood that Sibel completely converts her choices in life like having a decent job and a house with a stable partner and a child.

Raised under male domination and patriarchal values of Muslim culture in a European city, Sibel's character requests absolute freedom from all those morals in the beginning of the film. The famous line during her marriage proposal to Cahit summarizes the situation with Sibel's own words; "I want to live Cahit, to live and to dance and to fuck! And not just with one guy". Her marriage proposal to Cahit with such future aims stands outside societal norms (Figure 3.6). Sibel's complete personal and sexual independence is key to her envisioned chosen European identity and the set-up marriage with Cahit is the ticket for that freedom. During their marriage, on one occasion Sibel pretends to perform like a traditional Turkish wife, preparing a *raki* table for her husband and cooking a customary Turkish food *dolma* with her mother's recipe. Nonetheless, that night is also ruined with conversations on having a child together. At that point, Sibel sharply breaks with the housewife role and reasserts her desire for absolute independence by directly rejecting the proposition (Von Eicken 2015, p.7).

Figure 3.6: Sibel performing an extraordinary marriage proposal to Cahit



Source: Fatih Akin (2004), *Gegen die Wand*

After losing Cahit, Sibel finally experiences such a freedom in Istanbul. There, no male figures are present to complicate and dominate her life. Nevertheless, this time her experience of that complete freedom is accompanied with isolation and alienation, as much as failing to belong (Von Eicken 2015, p.1). Istanbul does not seem to be the culture and the place to live the freedom Sibel longed for. Von Eicken (2015, p.9) highlights that the director also emphasizes the character's relationship to the city as follows:

Akin here repeatedly uses wide, high-angle shots, which show Sibel in a crowd of people, making her look small and forlorn. The depiction of Istanbul as anonymous and of Sibel as isolated demonstrate that "she is an exile" - banished from her diasporic home as well as from her ethnic homeland".

As discussed previously, Beaumont underlines that nightwalking for solitary women has always been susceptible to doubt. If women appear on the streets of the city at night alone, they are commonly portrayed in terms of two roles, "both defined in relation to men: they are either predators, in the form of prostitutes; or the predated, the potential victims of sexual assault" (Beaumont 2015, p. 30). In both cases, they are denied a right to the city at night. Sibel, on the contrary diffuses to the nights and claims right to the city, neither as a predator nor as a predated. She expresses herself as she wishes, gets drunk and loses herself, and gets lost in the city anonymously like a male figure would freely enjoy. She lets the city and the night to possess her. But then, male assaulters or rapists don't miss any chances. As she was dancing with big gestures and dipsomaniacal drinking in the song once Cahit used to sing and dance (Figure 3.7), she has been definitely the center of attention observed by many eyes. In short, the city at night does not let her live the freedom to get lost and she cannot occupy a space of freedom to lose

herself. Instead, at the end of the night Sibel has been raped by the bartender after passing out.

Figure 3.7: Sibel watched by many eyes, drinking and dancing



Source: Fatih Akin (2004), *Gegen die Wand*

The thread of violence continues as Sibel leaves the bar. She encounters a group of men in a back alley who verbally attack her with imply of sex. But Sibel reacts back unexpectedly, stops, turns around and shouts back: “Why don’t you go fuck your mothers?” and then holds the man and kicks his nose with her knee. Thereafter, the man’s friends start beating and kicking Sibel to the ground. As they walk away, Sibel gets up and provocatively shouts back insulting them again. She has been beaten for a second round. Although she is now severely injured, her face covered in blood, her eyes swollen and her nose broken (Figure 3.8), Sibel gets up and provokes the men a third time, and finally one of them stabs her with a knife (Von Eicken 2015, p. 9).

Figure 3.8: Sibel laughing back and agitating the harassers



Source: Fatih Akin (2004), *Gegen die Wand*

In *Head-On* (Akin, 2004) the female character Sibel fights against all norms of patriarchy dictated by her family and culture. As Ceuterick (2020, p.128) puts it the

woman protagonist, Sibel, intentionally “inhabits the city, through walking, dancing, and establishing relations, in defiance of gender and cultural expectations”. In that journey, Sibel continuously performs gender. In her parents’ house she pretends to be a traditional Turkish girl longing for marriage, while outside in Hamburg she acts as a femme fatale in order to seduce many lovers. In addition, her gender performances contain both femininity and masculinity. Von Eicken (2015, p.9) states:

These back streets provide the setting for one the most striking scenes of the film, in which Sibel gets into a fight with a group of men. She undergoes a temporary transformation from a ‘feminine’ to a ‘masculine’ persona, in order to be able to meet the men she encounters as an equal.

To conclude, Sibel negotiates, inhabits and fights in various temporal and spatial structures. She is mobile in the cities as well as mobile across countries. Her gender performance is outside the codes of society dictated by her ethnic cultural norms and she continuously plays across gender expectations successfully. Here, her cultural hybridity further complicates her sense of belonging to the cities. Her character reflects complicated forms of relationships established with the opposite sex too. In this sense, *Head-On* particularly shows how gender, culture, and race as categories of identity affect the subject’s relationship to space and time at various levels (Ceuterick 2020, pp. 126-127). Sibel pushes the limits of any form of domination superimposed by the society. Nonetheless, her particular and violent experience of the city at night changes her character to a more compliant state at the end of the day. The narrative closes itself to Sibel’s further adventures, since she ends up having everything once she tenaciously rejected: having a stable partner, a decent job and a child.

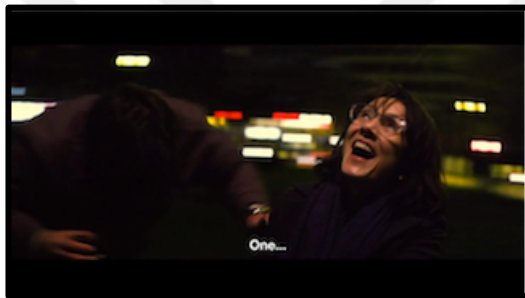
Compared to *Head-On*’s Sibel, Gloria (Paulina Garcia) in *Gloria* (2013)³⁵ experiences a secure and safe block-out. Gloria as the mother of two and grandmother of few, leaves behind her safety zone, her marriage several years ago. She has a routine office job and lives alone in an apartment flat with noisy and boisterous neighbors. Gloria is an aged woman around her sixties. Hanging out in dance clubs for elderly alone, she meets Rodolfo (Sergio Hernandez), a retired naval officer, and they start seeing each other. In

³⁵ The film is remade by Sebastian Lelio titled as *Gloria Bell* in 2018 in English language, starring Julianne Moore as the female lead. The remake is shot by same director and the narrative structure is almost a duplicate of the original film. Therefore, here the original version is discussed.

contrast to Gloria's free spirit, intellectuality, and independence, Rodolfo has duties to his daughters and recently divorced ex-wife. Unfortunately, Rodolfo's family baggage interrupts several intimate occasions while increasing the tension among the couple.

During a vacation trip with Rodolfo, Gloria finds herself alone in a hotel restaurant left uninformed as Rodolfo's ex-wife has an accident. Broken hearted, angry and enraged, she gets wasted all alone in casinos, clubs, kisses strangers, visits amusement parks and finally finds herself alone in the beach in the morning with full hangover and empty pockets (Figure 3.9).

Figure 3.9: Gloria's night of block-out



Source: Sebastian Lelio (2013), *Gloria*

Gloria finds a way to turn back home and pay the hotel expenditures and decides to return Rodolfo's paintball accessories in a playful yet revengeful way. As she encounters him with his family; she shoots Rodolfo with his paintball gun all over green, discharge all the paint all over his house and continues her life with laughter, smoking drugs, drinking and dancing at a friend's wedding. She seems to make peace with her being, embrace her solitude as a result of these adventures.

Gloria is an epitome of perfect nightwalker who is open to what night in the city brings. She looks for companies in dance clubs all by herself, has eager to change her current state, loneliness, is open to take emotional risks. At the end Gloria ends up lonely but transformed to a more self-confident, independent woman. Gloria has an active sexuality who is not represented as a mere sex object but a desiring sexual subject. Throughout the film, she becomes more sexually active, although she acknowledges that Rodolfo is not the one for her.

Gloria transgresses the norms dictated by her age, she is assertive, free spirited, and sexually active in contrast to Rodolfo's suffocating dependency to his ex-family. Through her lens, the audience sees Santiago's dance halls, casinos, amusement parks, streets, beaches, wedding ceremonies, yoga classes, street protests, crowds; but interestingly the director prefers focused medium shots and Gloria's existence, expressions, mood and feelings in these spaces are emphasized. Her version of *flânerie* emphasizes random encounters that has transformative effects and for Gloria the city is portrayed as a dynamic space with infinite possibilities.

To sum up, both of the female protagonists in *Head-on* and *Gloria* experience intoxicated pass-out nights alone in the city and after such bottom-outs, they both take serious decisions about their lives. Gloria releases her frustration and anger towards Rodolfo and makes peace with her future; while Sibel quits insisting upon her personal freedoms and conforms to a more decent and socially acceptable lifestyle. Rather than clear-cut binaries, the troubled young-adult Sibel and the free spirit elderly Gloria expose various complexities and contradictions in their characters, therefore reflect embodied experiences and most prominently, what the night in the city brings impact their choices.

3.4 NIGHT AS THE SETTING OF THE OTHER: FEMALE VAMPIRES

Predominantly, the night is the setting in Gothic films and horror genre where predators hide under the veil of darkness. These genres represent night as the realm of monstrous, outwardly, supernatural or uncanny. The nightwalker characters discover the "night side of the psyche" based on themes of neurosis, claustrophobia, terror, pain, fear, dislocation and obscurity at nighttime. Jervis and Collins (2008, p.4) underline that from Gothic and onwards playing across the boundaries of internal/external, self/other, in short, "alien yet oddly familiar" emerged in supernatural forms to test the modern subject after secularization of knowledge. Wisker (2016, p.15) underscores that the concept of uncanny is helpful to understand how Gothic works:

The Gothic makes frequent use of 'the uncanny', destabilizing fictional characters, spaces and readings, enacting confusion, dread and apprehension. It makes the homely frightening, the familiar unfamiliar, and the secure insecure, and this destabilization produces both fear and potential new insights and understanding.

The uncanny, as a tool of the Gothic, reveals what is concealed and unexpected: those alternative versions of self, of relationships, home and family, which relate to everyday 'reality'. It opens the way for energies that might burst out or intrude on and threaten everyday life.

In addition, mostly in Gothic literature, haunted houses; wild, abandoned, urban but decayed no-go areas are set as locations, and one of the chief characteristics of the Gothic is related to its spatialization and cultural connotations of those spatialities (Wisker 2016, p.17). In a way, although *chronos* is the night, the *topos* of these aforementioned genres is often secluded, peripheral settings such as castles or haunted isolated houses outside the city setting.

Since mostly vampires perish under daylight, the vampire genre certainly needs the night as the scenery. As an alien nocturnal species, vampires are easy to stereotype as those who are mostly sleeping in their coffins, living in shadows and drinking blood in secrecy. Auerbach adds that eternally alive, they embody not fear of death, but fear of life and their both power and curse comes from their undying vitality. Vampires are “neither inhuman nor nonhuman nor all-too-human: they are simply more alive than they should be” (Auerbach1997, pp. 1-6). Although the images of vampires’ change over time, from killer monsters to the beloved ones, they provide fruitful abstractions to reflect upon being an outsider or being human, as well as on issues like life, death, survival, immortality, existential homelessness, strengths and vulnerabilities of the body, or the insatiable instincts that we are cursed to live with.

In a similar vein, Day (2002, p. viii) highlights that vampire stories provide insights on the “primal human reality that encodes the shape and meaning of our existence”. In the meantime, as commercial products, vampire stories circulate in pastiche forms that merge the mythical with various genres. As a hybrid genre, vampire films widely range in collaboration with other genres, such as comedy, erotic, horror, or historical.

After the millennium, with the new television series and films like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), *Twilight Saga* (2008-2012) and the *Vampire Diaries* (2009-2017) the human-vampire interaction changed from pure terror and violence to romance and empathy among both species. Dudek (2018) underlines that all of these aforementioned

series appeal to young adult audience. Furthermore, a new era in the vampire genre begun since the vampire occasionally does not bite to kill and becomes the beloved one. Such a generic shift also signals an ideological and affective move from sympathy to love the “other”, where moral thought and action becomes significant. In other words, this love interest between a vampire and a human inspires the characters of both sides to reflect upon what it means to be good and to act in ways that promote goodness (Dudek 2018, p.2). Nonetheless, in these three series a romantic love between a male vampire and a female human is narrativized.

This brings us to the history of the female vampires in cinema and literature. Written in 1872 by J. Sheridan Le Fanu, *Carmilla* was the first work to feature a female vampire. Scholars consider *Carmilla* important because the book introduced several conventions that would appear in later vampire stories; like sleeping in a coffin or changing into an animal (i.e. a black cat). Furthermore, the character feels physical discomfort when confronted by religious symbols. Finally, not only was *Carmilla* the first female vampire, she was also the first lesbian vampire (Hirschmann 2011, pp. 12-14). Therefore, the book attracted significant attention at that time to fulfill queer curiosities as well.

Like *femmes fatales* of the noir films, female vampires are mostly associated with female sexuality and desire with fatal aims. Stephanou (2014, p.13) suggests that the vampire narratives of the nineteenth century represent the female vampire body as a site of degenerate place linked with woman’s impure blood. Whereas Hobson (2016, p. 9) underlines that the “female vampire as a sexual temptress” is an archetype in vampire fiction since Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1872) and Brides in Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) and patterns established ever since continue in some female vampire narratives. According to Hobson, such narratives reflect cultural fears about women’s active sexuality as well as sexually insatiable, attractive but deadly seductresses. In a way, insatiable hunger for blood is mostly accompanied by voracity for sex. This hypersexual image of *vampiress* blends violence, seduction and fears of destructive beauty and charm of womanhood (Hobson 2016, pp.10-12). Anyiwo similarly emphasizes that if the male vampire

reflects the cultural fears of an outsider, then the *vampira* is the manifestation of patriarchal societal fears on uncontrolled active female sexuality (Anyiwo 2016, p.173).

Two examples would demonstrate the intersection of female sexuality combined with vampirism that does not rely on the dark seductress archetype: *Interview with the Vampire* (Jordon, 1994) and Claire Denis' (2001) *Trouble Every Day*. In a way, both of these films punish the female vampires for their sexuality or let them suffer without female sexuality. Nevertheless, both films take place mostly interior settings for the female characters, since they are imprisoned and limited by the male figures. In *Interview with the Vampire*, the female vampire Claudia (Kirsten Dunst) is portrayed as an assertive woman trapped in the body of a pre-adolescent girl, whose frustration at never growing up slowly turns into bitterness and murderous rage. Anyiwo suggests that the film is an effective treatment of the female vampire, in terms of reflecting the problems of the male gaze and the infantilization of the female body (Anyiwo 2016, p. 185).

On the other hand, in the *Trouble Every Day* the vampirism or rather cannibalism of the characters are approached as a "sickness" to be cured. The film follows the stories of two couples intercutting them throughout the film. The first couple is the newly married Mr. and Mrs. Brown (Vincent Gallo) who come to France for their honeymoon. Later it is understood that Mr. Brown has a particular agenda beyond honeymooning, which is to reach a doctor to ask cure for his illness. Doctor Leo (Alex Descas) and his wife Core (Beatrice Dalle) is the second couple. Doctor Leo keeps Core imprisoned in a room, where all windows and doors are nailed with woods. Soon it is revealed that both Core and Mr. Brown share the same illness, which is having an irresistible urge to sex, and eating and biting their sex partners to death during the intercourse.

The film successfully depicts how Core and Mr. Brown are embodied with irresistible instincts. For instance, although Core is locked in a room under wooden planks, she manages to incite the next-door neighbor from her window with her provoking intense look. In that scene, Core manages to seduce her prey and uses her sexual availability to stimulate him. Finally, the man breaks the planks in rush to reach inside the room and

Core. Next, the film graphically depicts the combination of Core's sexual desire and her propensity to cannibalism, both of which are her burdens.

Interestingly, although the male figure, Mr. Brown, is outside and free during the film, Core, the female monstrous character is represented inside locked rooms. In contrast to Mr. Brown, Core is represented as suicidal, being eager to end this misery and her life. Finally, she is burned and killed by her fellow friend Mr. Brown to end her misery. Nonetheless, at the end of the day, the film represents female monstrous under the domination of male figures. Although she transgresses all the norms and pleases her appetite, she feels regret and guilt for what she is. Unlike Mr. Brown, Core is not peaceful with who she is. Meanwhile Mr. Brown continues gladly living with his killings and eating habits.

In addition to sexual activeness, vampirism is also related with existential homelessness and being in the world, since vampires might live forever and provide grounds to ask ontological questions on what it means to be human. Two contemporary films that question being and time through vampire abstractions might be Abel Ferrara's (1995) *The Addiction*³⁶ and Jim Jarmusch's (2013) *Only Lovers Left Alive*. These films break with the archetype of dark seductress but focus on existential problems related to life. Furthermore, they, in a way, demystify vampirism and its mythical grounds, and rather treat vampirism as a burden to live with. Simultaneously, vampirism is approached as a strength that is providing superior status to the mind and body of the vampire compared to the pitiable existence of human beings.

The Addiction (1995) follows the story of Kathleen (Lili Taylor) who is a philosophy doctorate student attacked by a female vampire one night while she was wandering in the city. Kathleen closely examines the changes in her body and her mind, all of which provide grounds for reflecting on ethics, morality, massacres, being or concepts like free will that are also befitted as materials in her philosophy dissertation. Slowly turning to a vampire, Kathleen thinks about the opinions of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Feuerbach

³⁶ The film is nominated to Golden Berlin Bear in Berlin Int. FF (1995). For more please see, *IMDB*, 2020, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0112288/awards?ref_=tt_awd [accessed 14 November 2020].

while feeding herself with human blood with the people around in her faculty. Finally, after her defense, she “stages a blood bath” at the doctoral defense party, infecting the rest of the faculty (DeGiglio-Bellemare 2009, p. 5). In a way, Kathleen performs her own massacre with her vampire buddies. Before falling on the dean’s throat and spitting a mouthful of blood at the camera she states that “I’d like to share a little bit of what I’ve learned through these long, hard years of study” (Vicari 2007).

Figure 3.10: Kathleen walking in the city alone, being watched



Source: Abel Ferrara (1995), *The Addiction*

After the party, Kathleen loses herself for a period of time. In the end, regretfully Kathleen turns to religion to quit her addiction of vampirism and lets herself perish under sunlight in the hospital while a priest is praying by her side. Soon, it is understood that she left the hospital cured, since we see her laying a rose on her own grave and walking away. Walking with her head held high, Kathleen seems leaving her “addiction” behind in the film’s final shot (Vicari 2007).

The director portrays back streets, dark corners, homelessness, colored street gangs of the city following the female vampire protagonist (Figure 3.10). Furthermore, the director shoots the whole film black and white that emphasize shadows of the night rather than the color of blood (Odell and le Blanc 2008, p. 102). In addition, throughout the film, historical issues such as the Holocaust, genocides or mass massacres are discussed in relation to vampirism. Kathleen reflects on her situation and compares it with the Holocaust while occasionally looking at the pictures of them (Figure 3.11). In a way, Kathleen takes a willful journey of harming others and drinking their blood, while consciously connecting her own actions with the historic slaughters. Looking at

photographs of the camps, she thinks out loud stating: “I finally see how all of this was possible” (Vicari 2007).

Figure 3.11: Kathleen looking at Holocaust pictures



Source: Abel Ferrara (1995), *The Addiction*

To conclude, rather than relying on an archetype of eroticized dark seductress, the film creates a female vampire who reflects thoroughly on social issues like history, massacres, humanity or power as well as individualistic matters like academic pursuits, being in the world, or insatiable desires. Following the character’s inner thoughts as well as actions, the film portrays vampirism as an addiction, and through an intellectual female vampire’s lens, all the above-mentioned issues are deliberately reviewed in a nightly setting in the city.

In a similar vein, in *Only Lovers Left Alive*³⁷, the vampires are tired of being cursed to live forever. The film tells the story of two vampire lovers, Adam (Tom Hiddleston) and Eve (Tilda Swinton) who reunite after some time being afar. Adam is portrayed as a suicidal and depressed musician, who lives in Detroit and is fed up with living among the untalented messy humanity. Although he shares his mastermind, musical talents and knowledge throughout history with renown figures, he does not hesitate to call the pitiable human being as “zombies” and complain on how they mess with the world. Whereas, his wife Eve is a female vampire living in Tangier, who travels to Detroit in order to visit her distressed husband, Adam. As they reunite, they romantically wander

³⁷ The film is nominated to Palme d’Or in Cannes FF (2013). The film has 9 wins and 42 nominations in various film festivals, for more please see, *IMDB*, 2020, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1714915/awards?ref_=tt_awd [accessed 24 December 2020].

in Detroit together and drink high quality blood from their high-quality goblets. However, their relationship and order are disrupted when Eve's uncontrollable little sister, Ava (Mia Wasikowska) visits them in Detroit.

This unusual vampire couple does not prey on people at nights. Instead, they supply their high-quality blood from hospitals, since random contaminated human blood might poison them and risk their health. Therefore, the couple mostly spend the nights at home, in a way pursue a detached and self-imprisoned lifestyle to avoid any incidents. Occasionally, at nights, they drive around the city, drive as they wish, wander in abandoned museums or theater halls which are now used as parking lots (Figure 3.12). Similar to Walter Benjamin's approach that comprehends industrial and cultural objects as fossils of the present, Adam and Eve trace back what there was before in those abandoned places and remind us how their historical value become dormant in the present culture. As Hastie (2014, p.66) highlights, like the Michigan Theater, Adam and Eve are not merely "symbols" of history: they are themselves embodiments of history. Eve calls Detroit Adam's wilderness, since the city itself is also mostly abandoned, filled with vacant houses. Adam's house resides on the outskirts of a Detroit that is practically a ghost town, a ruined, polluted, postapocalyptic remnant from the glory days of industrial capitalism (Booker and Daraiseh 2020). This postindustrial Detroit also has devastating effects on the characters too. Fascinated and detached they wander in the city and observe the fossils of the postindustrial city together.

Figure 3.12: Lovers wandering in the remnants of the city



Source: Jim Jarmusch (2013), *Only Lovers Left Alive*

Unlike other vampire films, *Only Lovers Left Alive* stages vampirism as a drive towards inaction, passivity and laziness instead of sexual aggression, excess and or exploitation (Price 2018, p. 345). Eve wanders and witnesses the city with a detached gaze, while mostly ignoring the multiple gazes following her. In a way, the strength coming from her vampire skills let her wander freely in the cities; both in Detroit and in Tangier. Only Eve's younger sister, Ava might be imagined as fitting to the dark seductress archetype since she seduces one of Adam's friends, invites him to Adam's house with sexual promises but succumbs to her instincts and drinks his blood till he is dead.

Anyiwo highlights that *Only Lovers Left Alive*, is a melancholic and bittersweet tale about love and mortality, where Adam and Eve portray deeply romantic, philosophical and sophisticated vampires who are above standard gendered stereotypes (Anyiwo 2016, p. 189). Similarly, Hughes states that the signification of the burden of vampirism takes away from the conventional vampire advantages such as sex appeal and special powers (Hughes 2011, p. 82). In a way, these abovementioned vampire films break with the vampire generic conventions and provide characters beyond expected gendered archetypes who wander in the city at nights.

3. 5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

As discussed in the chapter, nights include excess, transgression, deviancy or hallucinations. Nights provide settings to question the sane, dutiful, clear and rational actions of the diurnal. As Beaumont (2015, p. 28) highlights, "the nighttime city is another city, as well as the nighttime self is another self". Night in the city provides particular spatio-temporalities to petty criminals, detectives, stalkers, homeless, drinkers, bohemian outcasts, or the Satan himself/herself most of whom are the emblems of physical and existential homelessness (Beaumont 2015, p. 864). This chapter followed female protagonists of contemporary cinema who are mobile in the nighttime of the city. Through their lens, concepts that take place at nightly settings like sexual awakening, uncanny, dark sides of psyche, transgression, gender performances, excessive intoxication, block-out, danger and violence are discussed.

It is seen that, although nocturnalisation expanded, the precarious jobs provided to female characters might be gendered and under constant psychological or physical abuse. Furthermore, the female characters of the chapter provided insights on the simultaneous experience of being a gendered object to be looked at, and an active subject looking. All of them discover the city and go to places where they are not supposed to go. In addition, the female characters under focus are on the thresholds in their lives and courageous to leave behind their safety zones for adventures. A state of homelessness, or not belonging, is felt almost by every female character discussed in the chapter. Sibel of *Head-On* looks for freedom and satisfaction outside her houses defined by patriarchal or heteronormative cultural norms. Similarly, Erika of *La Pianiste* breaks with the pressures of the house and her dominant mother, while transgressing the strictness of her diurnal at nights in pursuit of sexual pleasure. While Jackie of *Red Road* mourns in her house for her family and satisfies her voyeuristic pleasures behind CCTV screens at nights. Christine of *Variety* is trying to fit to newly moved cosmopolitan city, while discovering her sexual awakening in a male-dominated sphere at nights. Finally, the misfit vampires reflect existential crises not fitting to the world itself.

It might be stated that the nights provide carnivalesque spatio-temporalities to the female characters, in a sense that all liquids of the body flow outside freely and uncontrollably. Erika's urine, Sibel and all vampire's blood, Jackie's and Gloria's sexuality flow outside their bodies and unite with the night they are passing through. Furthermore, the nocturnity brings a sense of unpredictability and contingency to the filmic narrative and to the characters. Beyond binary oppositions like good/bad, angel/whore dichotomies, various characters in the aforementioned films play with gender binaries, put pressure on them, while transgressing gender roles and embracing the complexity of human experience (Grossman 2009, pp. 34-36) Lastly, it might be stated that these female protagonists of the night portray transgressed female performances, as Gill suggests provide "lived embodied experiences of self-hood" (Gill 2008, p. 433) in contemporary cinema.

4. GENDER THEORIES ON FEMALE SUBJECTIVITY, SEXUALITY AND SPECIFICITY

4. 1. TEMPORALIZING THE FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

In general terms, the feminist waves are broad temporal categories and should not be approached as teleologically in progression, instead the waves denote major periodical and historical developments and vaults in feminism. Although some distinct characteristics of each period are significant, they all are also intertwined and the boundaries between them are not strict. Moreover, it should be stated that even today issues addressed in previous waves are not completely resolved, nor feminism is an outdated theoretical paradigm.

The term patriarchy refers to power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men, and patriarchal power rests on the meanings that are legitimized through biological sexual differences (Hodgson-Wright 1998, p.3). Feminism and the feminist movements in their broadest sense, struggle against oppression and patriarchal powers in society. As quite generally accepted, the first wave of feminism (early 20th century) is marked by woman-man equality for rights, whereas the second wave (broadly 1960s) emphasized the importance of the statement; "personal is political", and embraced discussing personal matters such as marriage, child rearing, sexual practices, reproductive rights, domestic violence, employment which are all seen as areas of male domination. The late 1980s and the 1990s are distinct with a third wave feminist debates that are questioning the woman-man binary in general. After the 2000s, post-feminism became popular in theoretical debates and nowadays a new trend occupies feminist scholars' agenda in the western world, which emphasizes the role of social media as a form of resistance, like the recent "me too" movements.

To start with; the first wave is also called the suffragette movement for women's political rights to vote, property and contract. Here, issues related to women's access to higher education, sexual consent, incest, prostitution were addressed too. The first wave

is rooted in sexual division of labor (public/private sphere) and women are taken equal but different from their male counterparts (Phillips and Cree 2014, p. 936). This period is also named as liberal feminism, where the feminist reactions reflected the general middle-class anxieties for women's equality (Lewis 2002, p.186). It can be claimed that in the first wave men were the central reference point through which women were marching to reach up for equity in fundamental rights. In this period, women's positions are ameliorated in reference to men's privileged position, but still man as a category has the central determinate privileged position.

On the contrary, in the second wave, female subjectivity is defined by reference to itself and raising radical consciousness or forming resistance through a uniform identity became more predominant. Areas of patriarchy, in which women are oppressed because of being "woman" are defined, addressed and refined. Today, the second wave's sensibilities and forms of resistance are still valid to pinpoint patriarchy and reveal oppression in society. Herein, womanhood is defined as an identity, essential characters of that identity and raising consciousness were the critical matters to tackle. The second wave is also the period between 1960s and 1980s when women's lives had been transformed majorly by changes in employment structures. In this period women's participation in public life, work and culture are emphasized in the feminist debates. This phase in feminism is also known as the women's liberation movement (Lewis 2002, p. 186). In contrast to the previous feminism's reformist promises, the second wave argued that women's liberation was more revolutionary, which essentially required raising collective consciousness based on gender (Thornham 1998, p. 25). Predominant issues of this wave were equal opportunity for women within the public sphere, issues related to rape, pornography, sexuality, reproduction, romance, marriage, as well as discussions on double burden of race and gender, or lesbian and queer sexual practices.

In the third wave, the essentialist tendencies of defining "womanhood" as a category is questioned and deconstructed, since the category of subject itself is unsettled in theoretical debates. Instead of a womanhood with idealized, essential properties to be defined within hetero-normativity, terms like gender or queer are selected to signify the

elements beyond gendered binaries and essentialism attached to the biological sexuality. In a way, rather than a totalizing uniformity, this time difference is emphasized and instead of defining biological sexual identity tied to nature, gender is seen as a social construct shaped and reshaped by cultural and historical contingencies (Stam 2000, 173). Today, feminism itself is characterized with diversity, fragmentation and a series of internal contestations and represents diverse perspectives and constituencies based on to this emphasis on difference rather than unity (Budgeon 2011, pp. 1-2).

That being said, a theoretical background for different approaches to feminism and different takes on female subjectivity accompanying those approaches would be relevant. Although the first wave feminism was mostly formed as a response to some concrete problems faced by women, its main target is to take male position's privileges and rights as the reference point for an equal rights movement. Shortcomings of this trend can also be seen in later debates, which are based on building up a woman subjectivity along with masculine ideals that also emphasizes a conception of "lack". Such an approach is also criticized for being insensitive to the requirements and particular conditions of genders who are not white and middle-class.

Second-wave feminism, on the other hand, has a wider horizon and problematizes upon female subjectivity in a more relational and historical manner. The second wave mainly tries to overcome private/public dichotomy. Private is political now, and female subjectivity is considered within its historically contingent determinants. Simone de Beauvoir's in *The Second Sex* (1949) laid the foundations for much of the theoretical work of the 1970s. Her statement on "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," became a motto in feminist discussions. Beauvoir also emphasizes that the civilization as a whole produce "the creature described as feminine" (cited in Gamble 1998, p.29). De Beauvoir argues that the category of woman has no substance but is merely a projection of male fantasies and such a myth of the eternal feminine could be changed if women can grasp the subjecthood they have been so far rejected. In a way, de Beauvoir portrays the problem of women subjectivity as a deficiency, since through history and language men have posited themselves as the Subject and women have internalized their status as the underprivileged Other. As the female is constituted secondary to male,

it is objectified, possessed and mastered as the second sex. This secondary position is further legitimated through the constitution of man as the absolute human subject. In order to change this given hierarchical relation between men and women, women should grasp their subjectivity on their own.

However, this task is not only difficult, given the advantageous position of the male subject, but also problematic in various other levels. De Beauvoir builds up her theory on a Hegelian framework, which relies on the historically contingent category of subject, that is conceptualized in a socially relational manner like in the master-slave dialectics. The master owes his recognition as master to the slave, and to the slave's self-consciousness that accepts the relation of domination. Although this picture may tell us how women failed to build up their subjectivity, it is still trapped within the bounds of identity thinking, domination and reactional politics. Any effort to turn this unequal relation to an equal or at least a reciprocal one would involve reciprocal recognition of two consciousnesses. Acceptance and internalization of inferiority turns the problem into the problem of right or wrong-consciousness; hence detaches the problem from its material, power-based grounds.

De Beauvoir's contribution opened many paths in later feminist debates. To start with, by accepting that the subject "woman" is the product of linguistic difference, the binaries that constitute the woman subject in a secondary position are questioned. Following de Beauvoir's examination of woman's construction as the underprivileged Other, French wave of feminism, namely, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva seek to explore the ways in which language and culture construct this sexual difference (Gamble 1998, p. 34). In general, this branch of French feminism questioned the very fact that the subject has always been written in the masculine form, as man, which is claimed to be universal or neutral (Grosz, 2005, pp. 164-165). Based on poststructuralist premises and a feminist approach indebted to postmodernist thought, this branch of feminism tends to analyze the processes by which man and woman are placed in separate, oppositional categories. In addition, they aim to render the development of any kind of overarching meta-theory for feminism or a form of autonomous subject impossible (Gamble 1998, p. 41).

As we shift from a Hegelian paradigm to that of a Nietzschean, we can talk about non-identity and difference as a more positive aspect. For Nietzsche, difference is the main texture of life and there is a becoming behind all beings. Nietzsche claims that deed comes before the doer and states that “there is no being behind doing, effecting, becoming; the doer is merely a fiction added to the deed. The deed is everything” (cited in Pippin 2007, p. 372). Here the critical emphasis turns towards “doing”, becoming or action rather than beings or things themselves (Richardson 2007, p. 211) For the deed or action to occur there needs to be a sort of difference in power so that power can flow and form the change. That being said, we can see how the picture of subjectivity is so different from both Cartesian and Hegelian subjects in this paradigm. Subject is not a stable, or an a priori, fixed category anymore; but rather subjectivities are formed through power and change.

According to Foucault, who takes up the Nietzschean paradigm, power is not only something that can be possessed by subjects; but also, it flows through their bodies and form them as subjectivities. Power is productive; as it produces spaces, regimes of truth, bodies, discourses knowledges and subjectivities. Although neither Nietzsche nor Foucault say much about feminism, the insights they provided had significant impacts on Judith Butler’s gender theory.

In general terms, Butler criticized the “consciousness raising” centered essentialist idealized womanhood as a category. Butler’s work is rooted in poststructuralist premises that suggests gender is not innate, nor biological but is something socially constructed and performed. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1999) proposes that the category of woman emerges as an effect of discourses and knowledges, therefore woman as a category cannot be fixed or idealized; instead, it is always unstable, fluid and open. Womanhood is fabricated at particular times in history in particular ways. She also criticizes the pervasive heterosexual assumption and idealization of certain aspects of gender in feminist theory, which in return produce new forms of hierarchy and exclusion (Butler 1999, p. viii). Butler’s dynamic approach of gender can be best understood with her notion of performativity. Performativity sees gender as something made by doing. Butler suggests that performativity is repetitive, ritual, normalized

performances of gender. Butler advocates that all these cannot be isolated from operations and dynamics of power; out of which performativity is shaped. Yet, the iterability and questioning of performativity involves a theory of agency as well (Butler 1999, pp. xxiv-xv).

To sum up, female subjectivity is formed through power relations that might permeate to the remotest fields and aspects of life. This theoretical shift enables us to speak about oppressive social relations instead of acknowledging the inferior status of women in their confrontation with the dominant Subject “men”, as a starting point. Female empowerment should not be imagined like a bargain between two genders nor like a mere possession of rights, but in a totally relational manner within power relations which apply to both genders simultaneously, whose material effects are inscribed to bodies and whose traces can be seen in various forms like institutions, discourses or knowledge systems.

4.2. CONTEMPORARY DISCUSSIONS ON POSTFEMINISM

It might be argued that the films discussed here in this thesis are mostly born into a feminist era that is predominantly shaped by postfeminist debates. Postfeminism might be assumed as a general criticism to a particular construction of femininity in mainstream media after the 2000s. Therefore, it is also useful to discuss the discussions on postfeminist media culture in order to see how the films in this research handle or challenge such debated issues.

To start with, postfeminism is an overloaded term with different meanings, yet has become one of the most important glossaries of feminist cultural analysis after the 2000s (Gill 2007, p. 147). Both postfeminism as a cultural condition and third-wave feminism as a political movement have allowed the expression and discussion of female sexuality regarding mainstream popular culture (Gwynne 2013, p. 6). Postfeminism replaces dualism with diversity, consensus with variety, thus embraces a dynamic approach that is not centered on a man-woman binary, but socially constructed features of gendered identity.

Postfeminism is anything and everything. To start with, “post-feminism” and “postfeminism” could be understood as distinctly different terms. The former represents a temporal switch like the newest feminist wave with different motivations, whereas the latter addresses to a cultural sensibility in general (Gwynne and Muller 2013, p.2). Similar to postmodernism, post-feminism is a sticky and loaded term. It might signal a type of feminism after the Second Wave (historical shift) or signal a theoretical position (beyond binarism) or reflect a regressive political stance (backlash against feminism). Gill states that the debates about post-feminism reflect the transformations of feminism, media culture and their mutual relationship and post-feminism can be best thought as a “sensibility” with certain distinguishable features that can be spotted in many films, TV shows, advertisements and other media products (Gill 2007, pp. 147-148).

Interestingly, the sensibilities of postfeminism form a contradictory discourse that combine feminist and anti-feminist views together in it. According to Gill (2007), the first sensibility is related to femininity as a bodily property. Here, a sexy body is presented as women’s key source of identity and women’s bodies are evaluated, scrutinized under the risk of “failing” by both men and women. From paparazzi news of wrinkly skins of celebrities to overeating habits during times of emotional breakdown, or to television shows all reflect this sensibility. Gill comments that self-confident strong women are always portrayed as fit and gleaming in the popular media, and celebrities like Jennifer Aniston and Nicole Kidman after their divorces are praised through such a sensibility. Strength, confidence and success are associated with a fit, young and sexy body (Gill 2007, p. 149).

The second feature is the sexualization of culture; where women are represented as erotic, young, pleasure seeking desirable subjectivities who are responsibly forming heterosexual healthy relationships. In this sensibility, there is an uneven distribution of discourses of sex among men and women, especially in the lad magazines, (such as *Cosmopolitan*) where men are hailed as “hedonists just wanting a shag”, instead women are interpellated as desirable heterosexual subjects to be acknowledged by the male counterparts. This goes hand in hand with the third sensibility that is called “from sex

objects to desiring sexual subjects”, where, the writer suggests, that there had been a shift in power operations; from an external male gaze to a self-policing narcissistic gaze for women. Gill exemplifies this trend through T-shirts with slogans such as “porn star”, “fit chick”, “knocker” etc., but points that these desiring sexual subjects are never older, bigger or wrinkled women (Gill 2007, pp. 150-152). A young, fit and sexy appearance is everything in the postfeminist era. On the other hand, as Gill and Scharff (2011, pp. xi-xii) underline, despite the high levels of sexual visibility, desires that could not be fitted into the family unit are considered increasingly unthinkable such as non-familial forms of kinship, childcare, non-monogamy. So, a particular free and sexually independent female subjectivity is appreciated in this media culture.

Another aspect of postfeminist sensibility is related to individualism, empowerment and choice emphasizes. This feature is closely linked to the neoliberal logic that constructs rational, self-caring citizens of free choice and autonomy. These personal choices are often associated with self-surveillance, self-monitoring and self-discipline on problems that require constant monitoring of bodily shape, size, sexual practice, career, home or finances (Gill 2007, pp. 153-155). Finally, the makeover paradigm emphasizes that one’s life is lacking or flawed in some way but is amenable to transformation through advice. Gill gives examples from television shows that humiliate their participants through their failures and wrong choices. Recent Turkish television shows on recreating oneself through cosmetic surgeries might be a good example for this sensibility.

Gill suggests that through these mentioned sensibilities, natural sexual difference is reasserted in media texts that are different from previous forms of feminisms, which are also liberated from requirements of gender based political correctness. In these texts with postfeminist sensibilities, traditional or harsh feminist ideas are not simply attacked or ignored as a whole; but some parts are simultaneously taken for granted and incorporated. Both feminist and anti-feminist discourses are “entangled” in the contradictions of post-feminism; such as autonomy, choice and self-improvement sit side by side with surveillance, discipline and vilification of wrong choices (Gill 2007, pp. 156-163). Angie McRobbie argues that this “double entanglement” facilitates both a doing and an undoing of feminism since women are offered particular kinds of freedom,

empowerment and choices as the substitute for feminist politics and transformation (McRobbie 2008).

MacRobbie (2008) in her book *Aftermath of Feminism* states that post- feminism is a process by which feminist gains of the 1970s and 1980s are actively and inexorably destabilized. She argues that elements of feminism have been incorporated into political and institutional life such as empowerment and choice emphasis, but then these elements are converted into more individualistic goals and became a kind of substitute for collective feminism. In addition, autonomous pleasures and rituals of enjoyable femininity are integrated to consumer culture and became popular in television programs like in *Sex and the City* (MacRobbie 2008, pp. 1-3). For MacRobbie, Bridget Jones is distinctly post-feminist with her fears, individualism career independency and marriage dreams on top of her girlishness and feminine outlook. In the case of Bridget, post-feminism in this context seems to mean gently reproaching the feminist past, on issues such as “sexual freedom, the right to drink, smoke, have fun in the city, and be economically independent”. But actually, in post-feminism, women are being disempowered through the very discourse of empowerment they are being offered as substitutes for feminism (MacRobbie 2008, pp. 11-12, 40).

The initial impersonifications of post-feminist debates, I guess, are the characters of *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Maguire, 2001), *Ally McBeal* (1997-2002, Fox TV) and *Sex and the City* (1998-2004, HBO). MacRobbie states that these young women want to be girlish and enjoy all sorts of traditional feminine pleasures, while their major dilemmas are posited as issues on how to catch a husband, the fantasies of romance and marriage. New sexual contract of young women is constructed through the opportunity to work, to gain qualifications, to control fertility and to earn enough money, to participate in the consumer culture, which in turn will become a defining feature of contemporary modes of feminine citizenship (MacRobbie 2008, pp. 21, 54).

In a similar vein, Modleski and Faludi highly criticize post-feminism. Modleski underlines that postfeminist texts are actually engaged in negating the goals of feminism. She states post-feminism is in fact delivering us back to a prefeminist world.

In a similar vein, for Faludi, post-feminism is the “backlash”, and its triumph lies in its ability to define itself as an ironic, pseudo-intellectual critique on the feminist movement, rather than an overtly hostile response to it. In a society which largely defines itself through media-inspired images, women are easily persuaded that feminism is “unfashionable, passé, and therefore not worthy of serious consideration” (Gamble 1998, pp. 37-38).

To conclude, postfeminism in a way dislocates strict feminist promises of the earlier era, while rearticulating them under discourses of empowerment, choice and agency. Previous concerns like power, gaze or objectification of woman as a category are disregarded yet they seem to be internalized by the newly constructed subjectivity of femininity redefined in the postfeminist era. Herein, beauty and sexual skills are a woman’s greatest assets. More importantly, as Gill (2008, p.442) summarizes, contemporary gender relations are profoundly contradictory in postfeminist media culture:

On the one hand, young women are hailed through a discourse of “can-do” girl power, yet on the other their bodies are powerfully reinscribed as sexual objects; on the one hand women are presented as active, desiring social subjects, yet on the other they are subject to a level of scrutiny and hostile surveillance that has no historical precedent. The patterned nature of the contradictions is what constitutes the sensibility, a sensibility in which notions of autonomy, choice and self-improvement sit side by side with surveillance, discipline and vilification of those who make the “wrong choices”.

4.3 FEMINIST DISCUSSIONS IN FILM STUDIES

Feminism and film discussions reconsider films for, by and about women on the axis of gender. Issues of representation, semiotics, ideology, film form, audience reception or women’s filmmaking processes are the areas to be investigated in film studies on gender (White 2000, pp. 115-117). Laura Mulvey, Marry Ann Doane, Linda Williams, Teresa de Lauretis, Kaja Silverman, Barbara Creed, Tania Modleski, Ann Kaplan and Christine Gledhill have been the influential figures in the early feminist film theory. Ann Kaplan’s (1978) examination of film noir and femme fatale figures, and Christine Gledhill’s (1987) work on melodrama and the women’s films, bell hooks’s (1981) discussions on black female subjectivities, Linda Williams’ (1989) work on body,

genres and excess; and Tania Modleski's (1984) discussion in terror of pleasure in horror films are essential and fundamental feminist film studies works. This section summarizes the major ideas of Mulvey, Silverman, Creed, Doane and de Lauretis in film studies in order to locate them within the broader feminist theoretical debates addressed in the previous section.

Laura Mulvey has been a very influential figure in feminist film studies and Mulvey's suggestion on the formation of male gaze has been long debated. Based on theories of Lacan who states: "unconscious is structured like language", Mulvey tries to expose the ways how the "unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form" (Chaudhuri 2006, p. 33). In her influential essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) Mulvey addresses that women are not positioned as meaning makers but always as objects in mainstream cinema. Using psychoanalytical tools, she examines the point of view in classic Hollywood cinema. Accordingly, she proposes that cinematic experience provides voyeurism, scopophilic pleasure of looking, narcissistic identification with the leading character and the cinematic apparatus portrays women as the image and men as the bearer of the look in the classic Hollywood cinema. In addition, verisimilitude techniques of continuity, invisible editing or camera movements support male protagonists' actions, whereas, female characters are mostly portrayed with their fragmented body parts, as cutout, or iconic, hence as a kind of spectacle. To conclude, the interpellation in mainstream cinema is gendered and the gaze in cinematic apparatus encourages the spectator to voyeuristically identify with a masculinist gaze.

On the other hand, Mary Ann Doane (1987) argues that female spectator could identify with the male gaze either paradoxically empowering herself while disempowering her gender; or identify in a masochistic way with lack. In *Desire to Desire*, Doane (1987) analyzes four cluster of films that could be labelled as women's films. The first group involves films in which a male doctor heals a woman patient; the second cluster includes maternal melodramas in which a traumatic separation of mother and child constitutes mothers as figures of masochism; the third set is composed of the classical love story films that set the limits and feasibility of female desire; and lastly the fourth group of films involve films that are influenced by gothic novels where women are

portrayed with paranoia or violence (Doane 1987, p. 36). For Doane, although these films centralize women characters, they ultimately frustrate women's desire and leave them with nothing but only "desire to desire" and the overwhelming presence of female body to female spectators makes it impossible to establish distance and control for voyeuristic pleasure (Stam 2000, p. 175).

Based on the examination of the aforementioned cluster of women's films of the 1940s, Doane (1987, p.36) suggests to defamiliarize all familiar gestures and icons of femininity while concluding that:

There is an almost obsessive association of the female protagonist with a deviation from some norm of mental stability or health, resulting in the recurrent investigation of psychical mechanisms frequently linked with the "feminine condition"-masochism, hysteria, neurosis, paranoia.

On another track, Kaja Silverman (1988) criticizes the preoccupation of feminist critique with the image track and focuses exclusively on the female characters' voices in classic Hollywood cinema. She suggests that although women might scream, cry, prattle or murmur, mostly women's speech is characterized as unreliable, thwarted or submissive. For Silverman, the voices of women are linked to their bodily aspects (such as crying, panting) and ultimately sexual difference is constructed and solidified through films' soundtracks (Chaudhuri 2006, p. 46). Furthermore, classical narrative of cinema has not at all female voiceovers comparable to the male voiceovers, a fact that also eliminates occupying a privileged perspective "outside" the diegesis in an omniscient position. For her, female voice in cinema functions as an "acoustic mirror" containing elements disavowed from male subjectivity (Chaudhuri 2006, pp. 51-60).

In a similar vein, combining Kristeva's ideas on abject and psychoanalysis, Barbara Creed discusses the patriarchal ideology in the horror genre, which portrays woman as the monstrous feminine (Chaudhuri 2006, p. 3). In her first category of abjection, Creed includes bodily wastes such as shit, blood, urine, and pus, as well as dead bodies (Creed 1993, p. 9). For Creed, another category of the abject is the maternal one. She claims that female monstrosity in the horror film is depicted in relation to mothering and reproductive functions. Creed states "woman is not, by her very nature, an abject being" rather, patriarchal ideology constructs her as such (Creed 1993).

It might be claimed that these aforementioned influential figures in film studies approach woman as a category and therefore align more with the second wave implying the ideological differences and power relations that form women as the second sex. These figures criticize women's portrayal as secondary, discuss how they are constructed and normalized as subordinate in the patriarchal order by examining the cinematic apparatus; namely the image track (Mulvey's gaze, Doane's desire to desire, Creed's monstrous feminine as abject) and soundtrack (Silverman's acoustic mirror). But approaching the category of woman as a totalized group itself is problematized by Teresa de Lauretis in film and cultural studies. De Lauretis criticizes the feminist theories of sexual difference that focus on women's difference from men. According to de Lauretis, this deceives feminist thinking within a conceptual opposition between man and woman, which entraps the discussion within patriarchal society and its very discourses (Chaudhuri 2006, p.64).

To further elaborate, de Lauretis situates the concept of sexual difference outside the man-woman binary and addresses to the social and sexual differences to be found among women. *Alice Doesn't* (1984) and *Technologies of Gender* (1987) are two major books where she discusses historically specific individuals known as "women" and an imaginary cultural representation constructed and abstracted as "Woman" (Chaudhuri 2006, p. 61). For de Lauretis (1984, p.5) the "Woman" is constructed in dominant discourses, the woman with capital "W" is a fictional construct, "an essence ascribed to all women distilled from numerous dominant Western cultural discourses". Just as Foucault, de Lauretis says gender is not an innate element within human beings but the complex product of social technologies; and feminism and theories of gender are also technologies of gender (de Lauretis 1984, p. 66). Therefore, women's cinema should show women as social subjects, while recognizing differences among them.

It goes without saying that film is a medium of representation and various decisions are made during the building of the scene, development of the characters from mise-en-scene to editing, soundtrack and to camera movements. As stated, this thesis problematizes upon following female protagonists of contemporary cinema wandering alone at night. For my theme, I similarly suggest that the issue at stake is not simply

related to representational concerns of equality, or a state of lack defined within the patriarchal meaning but discovering the specificities related to the woman's embodied experience when wandering alone at night. I also argue that these particularities come along with examining aspects related to subjectivity formed in flux, transgression, performativities of feminine masquerade or masculinity all of which are formed and reshaped during the very moments of encounters. In the next chapter, some useful terminologies will further be elaborated and exemplified through contemporary films with female protagonists.

4.4. MY THEORATICAL STANCE AND A TERMINOLOGICAL TOOLKIT

At this point, it is fruitful to refer to Judith Butler who informs us on the “mundane violence” of gender ideals that sustain the gender norms. As such ideals become the naturalized knowledge, they turn out to be judgments on how gender is to be lived (Butler 1999, p. xx). It might be suggested that Butler is less interested in the individual himself/herself or the biological sexes, but more in analyzing the processes by which the individual comes to assume her or his position as a gendered subject. Drawing on Foucault, Butler (1999) suggests that there is a tendency to naturalize sex as the foundational unchanging ground for the fictional or discursive category of woman (Chanter 2008, p. 265). Rather than assuming that identities are self-evident or fixed as essentialists would assume, Butler's work traces the processes by which gendered identity is constructed within language and discourse (Salih 2002, p.10). Therefore, her perspective on gender emphasizes a socially constructed view of masculinity and femininity that displaces and devalues priority of biological sexual difference (Stone 2006, p. 5). Butler proposes that gender is not only unavoidable but also a pervasive imperative functioning in a polarized and binary way and the biological base onto which gender is constructed should be foremost questioned (Chanter 2008, pp. 266-267).

Performativity is one of those concepts Butler tackles to disclose gender dynamics. Rather than given by sexes, gender is performatively produced, “is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed” (Butler 1999, p. 33). Crucially, Butler is not suggesting that gender identity is a performance, since that

would presuppose the existence of a subject or an actor who is doing that performance, rather Butler claims that the performances pre-exist the performers (Salih 2002, p. 10) by saying “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results” (Butler 1999, p. 33).

In her later work, *Bodies That Matter* (1993) Butler works on the genealogy of the discursive construction of bodies and biological sexes or, as Butler puts it, the book is “a poststructuralist rewriting of discursive performativity as it operates in the materialization of sex” (Butler 1993, p.12). Gender performativity is bind with the practices of regulatory sexual regimes, does not presuppose a choosing subject and is sustained by the regulatory norms in the heterosexual hegemony. Butler suggests that performativity works like Althusser’s notion of interpellation³⁸ that is calling the biologically different and sexed bodies (whether having a vagina or penis or else) to particular gendered performances accepted in the heteronormative culture (Butler 1993, pp. 7-8, 15).

With this, Butler argues that gender, sex division and heterosexuality are culturally produced and therefore could be subverted or altered (Stone 2006, p. 7). She stresses the importance to play and to subvert with the dualistic gender norms, since how to behave in certain bodies are formed socially by norms. Butler’s significant contribution is based on the assumption that neither women nor men are unified groups for political action, and politics should first aim to subvert this hegemony of dualistic gender binary (Stone 2006, p. 53).

It might be argued that the male flâneur is performative in the sense that Butler defines performativity not as a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through naturalization in the context of the body that is culturally sustained for a temporal duration (Buter 1999, p.xv). Elsewhere, she adds that performativity is not primarily theatrical, but indeed its theatricality is dissimulated (Butler 1993, p. 12) in a

³⁸ In his influential work, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Althusser (1970) suggests that ideologies point to certain individuals in a particular way, hail them and construct them as certain subjects through a process of *interpellation*.

way normalized. I suggest that the male version of *flânerie* is performative whose theatrical aspects are stabilized, but the female version might be thought as transgressive by itself. It plays with gender norms, contributes to the formation of identity, while experiments the boundaries of gendered hierarchy within socially produced spaces. Butler, (1999, p. 39) likewise, highlights the need for effectively “expanding the boundaries of what is in fact culturally intelligible” for gendered performances. In that sense, it might be stated that the female version of *flânerie* extends the culturally intelligible, normalized division of social spheres, deconstructs the gender asymmetry, plays with boundaries of vision, and itself a signification at the limits beyond gender binarism.

This brings us to the theoretical contributions of the French feminists, whose renown figures are Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous. As often stated, French feminism wish to reclaim and put back the significance of the “body” in feminist discussions. Following and simultaneously criticizing the psychoanalytic framework, they see the structure of subjectivity as an effect of the ways in which the subject represents and understands its own body (Grosz 1989, p. xv).

To start with, in her theory, Kristeva suggests that a woman cannot “be” because it is something that cannot be represented or said that is beyond ideologies (Chanter 2008, p. 270). Kristeva highlights the fact that the struggle for equal rights points to a state that men are better than women actually, therefore, the symbolic order of the paternal does not include the maternal or feminine particularity. She suggests some terminologies for the female particularity; such as the *semiotic chora*, which is composed of non-signifying raw materials, that are anarchic and formless circulation of sexual impulses and energies. Such a phase refers to a child's body before sexuality and language that consists of biorhythmically cooling and babbling that later language would repress (Brennan 2008, p. 278). These energies have no fixed aim, object or form and they animate the child's body in a series of rhythms, spasms, movements that predate its conscious corporeal control. Drawing similarities with the *chora*, Kristeva suggests that poetry or music might belong to such an energy; or impulsive laughter might be

imagined as an example of the most primitive instance of semiotic *chora* harnessed in vocalization (Grosz 1989, pp. 43-44).

In her influential essay on the concept of abjection, Kristeva (1982) claims that the delimitation of the “clean and proper” body is a condition of the subject's constitution as a speaking subject. Abjection attests to the always tenuous nature of the symbolic order and it is what the symbolic must reject or cover over. The abject brings the subject closer to its edge. It insists on the subject's necessary relation to death, corporeality, animality, materiality, basically on the relations which consciousness and reason find intolerable. The abject attests to the impossibility of clear borders, lines of demarcation or divisions between the proper and the improper, the clean and the unclean (Kristeva 1982, p. 73).

On the other hand, Cixous (1976) criticizes the phallogentrism of psychoanalysis and prioritizes femininity and bisexuality with a revolutionary potential. Cixous suggests that masculinity is rigid and resistant, whereas femininity is culturally more open to plurality. Her definition of bisexuality is not a vision of half woman half man (Hermaphrodite), but is one that permits itself to both sexes, which is in a way more than a sum total of two sexes (Cixous 1976, p.884). She sees a revolutionary potential in this in-betweenness, which is outside the phallogentric representationalism of the erotic universe. In addition, female writing is a strong revolutionary tool to break with the patriarchal language. She states, “writing is woman's” in her theory of *écriture féminine* by emphasizing that language might be the site of resistance for production of alternative gendered meanings. By writing about herself, woman will return to her own body, which is constructed as an “uncanny stranger on display” and has been confiscated from her (Cixous 1976, p. 880).

Differently, for Irigaray, not only is subjectivity structured with reference to the (symbolic) meaning of the body, but the body itself is the product and effect of socially appropriate understandings on the body. Dominant systems of discourse and representation are active ingredients of this social inscription of the sexed body,

producing it as phallic (in the case of men) and as castrated (in the case of women) (Grosz 1989, p. xv).

Irigaray searches for the female particularity not in reference to men but in reference to itself. Initially, she argues that sexual difference entails not only a reorganization of social and economic relations between the sexes, but also the entire restructuring of the symbolic order, of the social apparatuses; including language, forms of knowledge, and modes of representation. A challenge to this system requires rethinking thoroughly the roots and forms of dominant knowledges on gender, as well as their insufficiencies, points of excess or lacks (Grosz 2005, p. 163). Irigaray claims that within the male/female binarism and patriarchal discourse, women do not have the tools to conceive themselves. Actually, far from being lack, women exceed binary oppositions. Therefore, rather than reclaiming the female subjectivity within the masculine discourse or finding a place in patriarchy equal or close to men, she suggests looking for female specificity (Bolton 2011, pp. 32-34).

Conclusively, Irigaray tries to remind us the fact that sexual difference is not necessarily a negative aspect but might function as a full positivity, and energy as she states, “sexual difference would constitute the horizon of worlds more fecund than any known to date -at least in the West- and without reducing fecundity to the reproduction of bodies and flesh” (cited in Grosz 2005, p. 164).

Irigaray’s contribution on the theory of sexual difference is important in post-structuralist discussions of gendered identity. Most importantly, Irigaray claims that construction of female identity in opposition to, different from or in relation to masculine norm is problematic, since it holds a perspective of inferiority or lack of women to men, or of the feminine to masculine (Chanter 2008, p. 269). In the imaginary and symbolic processes that regulate the culture describe feminine in terms of deficiency or atrophy³⁹ (Irigaray 1977/1985, p. 69). Her scheme discards constitution of

³⁹ Elsewhere, Irigaray lists the binary oppositions in psychoanalytic terminology for both genders as follows: be/become, have/have not have sex organ, phallic/non phallic, penis/clitoris, or penis/vagina, plus/minus, clearly representable/ dark continent, logos / silence, desire for the mother/ desire to be the mother (Irigaray 1974/1985, p.22) in order to emphasize the privileged terms.

pejorative “others” in the first place, and according to her, the category of woman is constructed as such.

Following a Derridean track on examining hierarchical construction of differences among genders, Irigaray claims that the devalued, hierarchical or pejorative otherness allows management of all social differences and is the organizing principal in producing meaning and social order in the phallogocentric system of meaning. To her, sexual difference based on the claims of natural biological claims have socially coded foundations, is produced in the linguistic system and have material results on the sexed bodies (Braidotti 2008, pp.299-300). In a way, Irigaray accepts that bodies are sexually different, but rejects the hierarchically set meanings given to those differences based on naturalistic claims. Furthermore, instead of starting to form such a negative reference point, she affirms differences while appraising particularity and specificity.

The Irigarayan notion of “morphology” becomes a privileged site of production of forms of resistance in this phallogocentric code (Braidotti 2008, p. 301) Rather than biology, Irigaray prefers the term morphology which refers to the ways in which the body and anatomy of each sex is lived by the subject and represented in culture. As a social and psychological concept, it replaces the essentialism of biologism and “anatomical destiny” that is pervasive in psychoanalysis (Grosz 1989 p. xix-xx). For Irigaray, it is not women's anatomies but the psychical and social meanings of women's bodies within patriarchy that is seen as castrated. Women's oppression is not caused by their anatomies or physiologies; but becomes pervasive by the internalization of the social meanings and values accorded to women's bodies in a misogynist culture (Grosz 1989, pp. xix-xx). Bodies are not conceived, according to Irigaray, as biologically or anatomically given, inert, brute objects, fixed by nature once and for all. She sees them as the bearers of meanings and values. Grosz (1989, p. 111) states:

Whether male or female, the human body is thus already coded, placed in a social network, and given meaning in and by culture, the male being constituted as virile or phallic, the female as passive and castrated. These are, but of the social and psychical meaning of the body. It is for this reason that Irigaray carefully refers to the morphology and not to the anatomy of the body: “We must go back to the question not of the anatomy but of the morphology of the female sex” (1977, p.64). The lived body, the experience of corporeality, is a social body: but it should not be reduced merely to a sociological phenomenon too.

Female sexuality has always been conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters, what is normal is defined in terms of male sexuality (Irigaray 1985, p. 23). In this phallic economy, sexual imaginary is mostly enacted due to men's phantasies, where visibility and presence is dominant. Irigaray lays emphasis on "touching" rather than looking on the female sexuality, where she famously argues rather than singular, female sexuality is at least double or plural like the two lips in the female sexual organ (Irigaray 1985, pp. 25-28). Female sexuality has its own specificity where touching is more privileged.

Based on the multiplicity and plurality of female desire, Irigaray complains on the incapacity of the symbolic system to represent the female imaginary. Women experience themselves, again in relation to male experience, as fragmentarily, as waste, as excess, "what is left of a mirror invested by the masculine subject to reflect himself". In this equation, female desire and the role of femininity is prescribed by masculine "specula(riza)tion" (Irigaray 1985, p. 30).

Finally, Irigaray emphasizes that the "elsewhere of female pleasure" can be found only at the price of crossing the mirror (Irigaray 1985, p.77). Dismissing the Lacanian flat mirror that is reflecting what it sees unidimensional, the curved mirror or the "speculum" enables women to see themselves in multiplicity, to examine themselves, and understand their sexual specificity unrelated to the masculine imaginary. In this sense, Irigaray actively affirms a project challenging and deconstructing the cultural representations of femininity so that it may be capable of representation and recognition in its own self-defined terms. (Grosz 1989, p. 101). In a way, Irigaray aims to break out of the phallogocentric circuit in which women function only as objects. Accordingly, she criticizes representational systems marking women's bodies as lacking, dependent, or oriented towards the phallus. This also includes aspects related to female eroticism and corporeality which exceed patriarchal representations (Grosz 1989, p.109).

On another track Grosz (1994, p.22) highlights the need for feminist philosophy to seek an embodied subjectivity. According to her theory, sex cannot be prior to gender but itself is shaped by and contingent to gender. Processes behind creating and recreating

sexed bodies are partly material and partly social or experiential. Out of this, marked bodies, or the bodies of difference are constructed (Birke 2008, p. 201). As Braidotti puts it; “discursive practices, imaginary identifications or ideological beliefs are tattooed on bodies and thus are constitutive of embodied subjectivities” (Braidotti 2002, p. 26). In a way, bodies are marked by multiple discourses, cannot be experienced independent of them, and these social dynamics are embedded to the sexes on biological basis.

Similarly, Sarah Ahmed underlines that the war of signification takes place at the level of embodiment and the challenging of the relation between the fixing of the signifier “woman”. Ahmed suggests that in Irigaray's work, embodiment is simultaneously differential, material and fleshy. The body is not reduced to either an anatomical/biological entity or a text, but is a morphology, which is constituted by both yet exceeding all (Ahmed 1999, pp.92.93).

Likewise, Braidotti highlights that the embodied subject is a process of intersecting forces (affects) and spatio-temporal variables (connections), and the body is the place where all multifunctional and complex structure of subjectivity intersects. In the process of “becoming-subject”, she adds, the subject has to deal with material and semiotic conditions, which are “institutional sets of rules and regulations as well as the forms of cultural representation that sustain them” (Braidotti 2002, p.21).

This brings us to her distinction of two concepts, power as a negative force (*potestas*) which prohibits and constrains; and as a positive force (*potentia*) which empowers and enables. The constant negotiation between the two poles results with a concept of subjectivity that is always in process. Braidotti (2002, p.22) adds that:

The feminism of sexual difference should be read as emphasizing the political importance of desire as opposed to the will, and of its role in the constitution of the subject. Not just libidinal desire, but rather ontological desire, the desire to be, the tendency of the subject to be, the predisposition of the subject towards being.

4.5 YOUNG RUNAWAYS: FEMALE MOBILITY AND DISCOVERY OF SEXUALITY

At this point it might be fruitful to discuss dynamics at play on female mobility with another film cluster, which have female protagonists on the road. The selected films for a brief discussion are *Vagabond* (Varda, 1985), *Morvern Callar* (Ramsay, 2002) and *Samersault* (Shortland, 2004), all of which have female runaway protagonists discovering their sexuality on the way, recreating a journey for their own while disregarding and transgressing patriarchal norms. In these films, the female protagonists are runaways instead of being urban flâneurs per se, therefore not much could be said on the urban spectacle itself, but they provide discerning information on the intersection between gender, solitary mobility, youth and construction of subjectivity in flux.

To start with, *Sans Toit Ni Loi* (*Vagabond*, Varda, 1985) reflects perfectly how female mobility is culturally gender-sensitive and bound with multiple discourses. Agnès Varda's *Vagabond* opens with the discovery of a young woman's, Mona's dead body in a ditch. It is understood that she has frozen to death the night before. The leading character, Mona Bergeron (Sandrine Bonnaire), is a free, adrift, mobile and independent woman camping and hitchhiking in France⁴⁰. She baths in the sea (Figure 4.1), camps in cemeteries, stays in abandoned houses, and makes small amounts of money with daily casual jobs. Through flashbacks and interviews, the film tells the story of how Mona is perceived in the society. The film's narrative is episodically constructed on these different perspectives. Although there are not many scenes taking place outside at night, still the film offers the opportunity to discuss gender sensitivity of solitary mobility and the discourses evolving around it.

Mona's character definitely embraces her free and mobile lifestyle. The film does not show the character's motivations that led to her situation, neither lets the audience to

⁴⁰ Agnès Varda decided to work on the story being inspired by the freezing campers in France. But to make a film about road people/vagrants (male and female) who perish from the cold substantially modified when she encountered a hitchhiking vagabond, Settina (Vincendeau & Hayward 2006, p. 270). *Vagabond's* Mona also reminds Pippa Bacca, a feminist activist who was hitchhiking across countries to promote world peace, symbolically wearing a wedding dress during her trek. In April 2008, Pippa's body was found dead in Kocaeli, Turkey.

identify with her feelings, rather highlights the witnesses and their views. The film's episodic structure is based on multiple strangers' discourses Mona had encountered on the road, like the truck driver she hitchhikes, the family she asks for food, the commune farmers she stays with for a while, the car washer giving a job and the distant snob female academician who objectifies Mona from above as a social object to be investigated. Mostly they lie or twist the situations or reflect a critical and traditional viewpoint that basically does not consent female mobility. For instance, the truck driver Mona hitchhikes offers to visit the bed at the back of the truck, when rejected, makes Mona get off the truck. Likewise, the male car washer who gives a washing job to Mona, attempts to abuse Mona in her tent but tells that actually female drifters are not reliable, and are just "loafers after men". Mona is envied by some too. The farmer's daughter, a woman at Mona's age states to her parents that she would like to be free like her, while adding, going after wherever you like is better than having food on the table. Similarly, an elder woman complains to her husband by saying "if you marry the wrong man, you are stuck for life". Sometimes Mona is assaulted or attacked or even raped. Mona herself also occasionally abuses or assaults people or has consensual sexual activities. She is a complex survivor, who is free, careless, strong, distant and does not let anything to delimit her. At the same time, she is lonely and vulnerable to multiple threats.

Figure 4.1: Mona bathing in the sea and male gazes following her dressing on



Source: Agnès Varda, 1985, *Vagabond*



Mona is a nomad, and it seems like she prefers such a lifestyle willfully. When there are chances to settle, she always prefers hitting the road and confronts traditional expectations all the time. Mona is a woman of few words, she is reserved, self-assured and firm. The character only exists through others' representations of her, and the

character is constructed by the perspectives, fantasies, and desires of others instead of herself. Such statements mark and embody Mona, shape her experience and being in the world, yet she exceeds all with her potential.

Figure 4.2: Mona hitting the road



Source: Agnès Varda, 1985, *Vagabond*

Therefore, *Vagabond* is like a playground in which to discuss how female subjectivity is constructed by discourses, yet simultaneously challenged, transgressed or reshaped by Mona. As Hayward (2000) recognizes, the film consists of a series of gazes with diverse specular positions and each contributor “fixes their gaze not on Mona but on their perception of Mona as a figure of their desire” (Hayward 2000, p. 270). Thus, the film makes explicit the language or symbolic order that surrounds a female subject’s actions and her gendered identity during mobility. But interestingly, Mona does not let these discourses impact her actions, dismisses all gazes as equivalent in their failure to relate or impress Mona, so male discourses whether uttered by men or women, cannot produce her identity (Hayward 2000, p. 286). She is the autonomous, indifferent, strong yet vulnerable enigmatic other, whose material embodiment is covered by conflicting multiple discourses.

Comparing other works of the director, McFadden (2014, p.65) highlights that Agnès Varda seals her status as a feminist filmmaker with *Vagabond* by stating that:

Throughout her career, Varda has explored female subjectivity through a variety of female characters. In Les plages d’Agnès, Varda includes excerpts from her second film, Cléo de 5 à 7, in which she interrogates female subject formation, images of women, and societal standards of beauty for the first time. Cléo, Mona, Jane, and she herself are different female protagonists through whom Varda explores

representations of female subjectivity in layered ways, thereby altering traditional depictions of women as narrative and visual accessories .

A similar comparison is made by Hottell (1999) too. Hottell argues that *Vagabond* picks up where *Cléo from 5 to 7* ended in terms of the path followed by the main female characters (Hottell 1999, p.684). Flitterman-Lewis (1990, p.32) similarly refers to *Vagabond* as the remake of the earlier *Cléo*. In addition, Ozgen Tuncer (2012) argues that the activity of walking is portrayed as a gender-sensitive corporeal practice in Varda's "women in movement" films. They embody a transgression of stratified territories such as the image-oriented society of the spectacle in *Cléo*, myths of adolescence and settled living in *Vagabond*, or the boundaries of aging in *Les Plages d'Agnès* (2008) (Ozgen-Tuncer 2012, p. 103).

On a similar track, in terms of freedom of female mobility, Artt (2013) compares *Vagabond* with *Friday Night* (Denis, 2002). Artt suggests that *Vagabond* shows its willful protagonist Mona as highly vulnerable on her journey. On the other hand, in Claire Denis' *Friday Night*, the "urban wilderness of the city" is not presented as a danger to the character (Artt 2013, p. 6).

Same goes for Morvern, for her, being on the road is not a dangerous experience. This brings us to the discussion on another film, *Morvern Callar* (2002). Directed by Lynne Ramsay, the film tells the story of a young supermarket clerk, who gives new directions to her life after her boyfriend's suicide. The film opens with Morvern's (Samantha Morton) discovery of her boyfriend's dead body lying on the floor on Christmas evening. Morvern touches and caresses the corpse for a while, then starts finding the things her boyfriend left to her one by one; several presents, a note named "read me", a novel in the computer, some money for the funeral and a mix tape labeled "music for you". Leaving the house as it is, Morvern goes out dressed to party with her friends for Christmas as if nothing happened. Eventually turning back home, Morvern decides what to do with the novel, the money and the corpse, but with fresh ideas unlike what her boyfriend requested. She sends the novel to the publishers under her name, decides to spend the funeral money with her friend Lanna (Kathleen McDermont) for a short vacation in Spain and dismembers the corpse carefully and bury the parts on top of a

hill. The film continues with Lanna and Morvern's adventures in Spain. They have fun and party with men in an apart hotel. All of a sudden, Morvern decides to follow new adventures and the couple starts wandering in Spain. The roads end up in a village where tensions among the friends also increase out of small things. There, Morvern discovers that the publishers decided to publish "her novel" and is ready to pay a significant amount for it. Finally, she leaves her friend Lanna behind uninformed, heads to an unknown future, changes her name to Jackie and hitchhikes in Spain casually and serenely.

Morvern is an extraordinary character challenging her situation, making choices, taking irreversible paths and recreating a brand-new world for her own. She silently, unruly and playfully rejects and leaves behind her previous social self, while adopts and creates a new one outside of what the social norms demand or her boyfriend requests. As Bolton summarizes "Morvern defies convention, defies the social order of things, and removes herself from her 'normal' life" (Bolton 2011, p. 152) and in her new world, she sets herself free in her actions. Again, Morvern is represented as a female character with her affinity to her potential, and through mobility and solitude she discovers herself on her new path alone.

What makes the film interesting is that Morvern does not explain much verbally throughout the film, instead a state of silence accompanies her. Like Mona in *Vagabond*, Morvern is a woman with few words. Silence is Morvern's partner in crime. As Irigaray suggests muteness in a woman might be due to the fact that she is subject to a language that exiles her (Bolton 2011, p. 156). Similarly, Morvern rejects to or does not attempt to explain what she is going through. Instead, Morvern uses silence as a strategy to reflect upon, to become one with the world, to feel the environment, or to shift the emphasis to her flesh, or to her senses like touching, looking and listening. Through usage of silence, and close-up shots of her face and hands, a haptic world is created by the director. The film is profoundly concerned with conveying a sense of being inside its protagonist's silence. With this, the film also expands our understanding on how silence may be used and performed in cinema as a way of understanding a

character's interiority and a way of representing individual freedom that goes beyond the expression of trauma or sexuality (Artt 2013, pp. 1-2, 12).

In her reserved world, Morvern looks and touches. The film often links the reach of her eye to the reach of her hand, while merging the senses of seeing and feeling with engagement (Johnson 2004, p. 1364). This is how Morvern's connection to the world is shown in the filmic language (Figure 4.3). For instance, Morvern touches softly her boyfriend's dead body, or wombs on a vegetable, or plays with water or solid in nature, where the emphasis on touching is given by close-up shots of her hands. Johnson (2004) suggests that the looks of the objects are returned back to Morvern by the camera too. This makes the film visually remarkable since "an impossible reverse angle", for example the point of view of an ant is given too. Such leitmotif shots augment Morvern's connectedness to the world and create a sense of coherence visually. Johnson (2004, p.1365) suggests as follows:

.... the camera sees from the perspective of the worm, or the Flokati rug, a perspective enabled by the conventions of cinema to return Morvern's unreturnable looks. That is, almost every shot in the film is literally photographed from the point of view of the nearby objects at which Morvern stares.

Figure 4.3: Morvern touching



Source: Lynne Ramsay, 2002, *Morvern Callar*

Not only Morvern touches details of the world, but also actively looks. She observes the Spanish village as a spectacle, dive in the crowds in the festive events that occurs in the village to get lost (Figure 4.4), all of a sudden recognizes and follows a cockroach in a hotel room that leads her to a young man next door. Morvern engages with the world in her particular way. The following depiction of a scene by Johnson (2004, p.1368) exemplifies her relationship to the world:

Her downward glance catches on a cockroach, which crosses under the door into her hotel room. Interested, she follows the roach through her room and into the hallway and ends up at a random hotel door through which she can hear the sounds of a man crying. She knocks on the door, and the man inside tells her that his mother has died. In a negotiation of intimacy and privacy, isolation and interest, they bounce around and off each other in ways that eventually end in sex, an act that quiets the musical soundtrack that has been associated with Morvern's isolating headphones.

Figure 4.4: Morvern enjoying the festival in the Spanish village



Source: Lynne Ramsay, 2002, *Morvern Callar*

Morvern's introvert state of silence is often interrupted by the soundtrack filled with the playlist left by Morvern's boyfriend. Music is an essential part of the narrative and reflects Morvern's state of mind most of the time. Especially during the scene when Morvern cuts her boyfriend's body slowly, the song by The Velvet Underground's *I'm Sticking with You* displays an ironic appreciation for the extremity of her actions (Jones 2002, p.74). The songs also reflect Morvern's character, in a way suture the imbalances of her life to a feeling that at the end of the day Morvern is a young woman trying to figure out what to do with the cards in her hand. Lastly, the character is mobile throughout the film, and during her route, both the wilderness and the crowds embrace her and are not seen as holding any danger.

To conclude, instead of speaking, through hearing, touching and looking Morvern connects and sticks to the world. The film creates a haptic world and Morvern seems to reject to explain what she is going through. Her silence does not equal to passivity but emphasizes other sensory organs rather than language. Morvern denies and just leaves behind her previous life and societal norms imposed by it. She does not seem revengeful nor traumatic, rather reshapes her life and identity in her own terms. Such a big event, namely the suicide of her boyfriend, is challenged and appropriated, in a way used as a

form of *potentia* to give new directions to her life. The film reflects a female protagonist journey to build up a new life after hitting the road, “her exile is self-imposed” (Chick 2016, p.2). In addition, on many occasions she refreshes her make up or polishes her fingernails and takes care of herself, yet she burns out in parties due to drug and alcohol overdose. Her character reflects a particular way of mourning interwoven with self-care, anger, pain, exhaustion and silence simultaneously. She deals with all of them always on the road.

Lastly, directed by Cate Shortland, *Somersault* (2014) follows a runaway female teenager as well. This time the female protagonist uses her sexuality as a strategy to survive. The film tells the story of Heidi (Abbie Cornish), who flees home after her mother witnesses an inappropriate sexual moment between Heidi and her own boyfriend. Heidi runs away from home and reaches to a snow resort town, where she experiences short-lived sexual encounters. Heidi uses sex as currency in order to have a roof over her head (Hancock 2014, p.160). Finally, she meets Joe (Sam Worthington), and what begins as a short-lived relationship turns to a strong affection among the couple. Facing strong emotions, Heidi also experiences turbulences, confusion and intense peaks and downs of adolescence. In the end, Heidi’s mother finds her and together they return back to their home.

Somersault provides space for discussions evolving around gender, experimental curiosity of teenage sexuality and solitude mobility. It is a coming-of-age narrative focusing on growing up, taking responsibilities, discovery of sexuality and solitude.⁴¹ The film starts with a big mistake and how Heidi deals with that. The character tests her limits and sets herself free while making decisions. In this sense is also a pedagogical film, as Gottschall (2014, p. 575) puts it on “(re)making the girl as a feminine and emotional subject” supposedly undergoing a transition. The film also provides discussions on the social and the embodied, corporeal nature of femininity by using

⁴¹ A similar theme on a state of homelessness, looking for love and a new life *en route*, while building up a new life from scratch along the way can be seen in a recent film, *American Honey* (Arnold, 2016) too. Both films portray absent fathers and problematic single mothers, who are, as Gottschall (2014, p.579) puts, “catalysts to the girl protagonists’ problems”.

certain techniques of film language. Hancock (2014, p.161) summarizes them as follows:

...in Somersault the convention of a protagonist experiencing internal reckonings, states of confusion and epiphanic peaks is accomplished less through narrative-led action and more through affective and sensorially led sequences... constructed via a literal closeness to Heidi, close ups and unmissable attention to her own bodily senses, prompting, or pushing for, an embodied, empathetic identification with Heidi at a more visceral level.

Heidi's body becomes where femininity is both experienced and mimicked. Through mimicry, Heidi pretends to behave like an adult, simultaneously discovering certain things in her body for the first time. Heidi tests her limits in building up relationships with men. Irigaray (1985, p.76) underlines that the path historically assigned to the feminine is that of mimicry, assuming feminine roles deliberately. That is what Heidi does in the beginning. For instance, in a scene, she stands in front of the mirror and roleplays as if a man finds her sexy. Later, she passionately kisses her reflection on the mirror at the end of the scene (Figure 4.5). In a way, she sees herself in the flat mirror or the masculine imaginary, as a mature woman to be desired. As Irigaray states, she makes-believe, mimics so perfectly as to forget she is acting out as a man's projections (Irigaray 1974, p.53).

Figure 4.5: Heidi examining herself in the flat mirror



Source: Cate Shortland, 2004, *Somersault*

While growing up as a woman, and discovering the parameters of sexuality, Heidi also holds a childish side with her too. Her playfulness and occasional childish routines continue when she is alone. In a scene, after buying herself new red gloves, she happily claps her hands playing paddy cake with an imaginary friend in her new gloves in the woods (Tinkham 2006). Heidi also keeps a scrapbook journal in which she glues

pictures she likes. The items in this book also oscillate between childhood and adulthood, like Heidi does, a nude woman's picture is followed by the card postal of a snowy mountain (Figure 4.6). The scrapbook is in a way a diary of, reminding her what she is experiencing.

Figure 4.6: Heidi playing paddy cake, gluing new items on her scrapbook



Source: Cate Shortland, 2004, *Somersault*

To conclude, Heidi does not have a home to turn back, she exiles herself to an unknown future, on the road she tests the limits of sexuality and love while growing up. Heidi is surrounded by multiple discourses on femininity. She is both a woman who gets drunk at pubs and picks up random men, and a child who innocently plays with her toys in her isolation. She is a watchful character carefully observing and examining to learn how to behave from a distance. The character captures the look of a vulnerable girl who might get lost or abused, but actually contemplating her next move carefully (Tinkham 2006). Similar to Morvern, Heidi is induced to touch objects and surroundings, and a woman of few words where the camera emphasizes her senses. In addition, Heidi reflects twists as a sexual object and a sexual agent simultaneously. As Hancock (2014, p.163) summarizes:

The character of Heidi complicates normative readings of sexuality as feminine or unfeminine, disempowered or empowered, by showing them as interwoven and not mutually exclusive. In particular, the framing of Heidi as childlike and innocent is seemingly in direct contrast with her sexual activities. However, the intimacy of the camera and the visceral attachment to Heidi collides together these contrasting elements in a way that resists easy explanation and reorients us towards ideas of femininity.

As discussed, in these three films solitary mobility provides construction of female identities on the road to the characters. All of the characters emphasize a state of homelessness, they are in transition and are always on the road for reclaiming and

discovering their identities. Besides, the characters' inner worlds are expressed via haptic and visceral tools constructed by the cinematic medium and camera. They actively engage with their surroundings, an emphasis on touch as well as silence are used as motifs in these young adult female films. They are characters with few words and their muteness is rather accompanied by their internal states. Finally, they all refuse the norms of the patriarchal order, test and transgress the limits dictated while discovering themselves along the way. They show the gender sensitive dimension of solitary female mobility and highlight the multiple discourses and gazes of the symbolic at play. Interestingly all these three films are directed by female directors so, they can also be seen as examples of the women's cinema.

4.6 SEX AND THE CITY: FEMALE DESIRE AND ENDANGERMENT

Besides rape incidents, harassments or attacks, female characters might fight with anonymous stalkers or killers in films. In crime thriller neo-noir narratives, especially sexually independent female characters might be in significant danger, while experiencing their sexuality and engaging with the city. Some examples might be Bree (Jane Fonda) in *Klute* (Pakula, 1971), Theresa (Diane Keaton) in *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* (Brooks, 1977), and Frannie (Meg Ryan) in *In the Cut* (Campion, 2003). These female figures are reflected as lonely sexually independent characters trying to solve their inner struggles against fairy tales of romance. They look for ease at the public spaces of the city at nights, harassed by stalkers or killers, while taking emotional risks with their endangering love affairs. In all three films, the female protagonist is situated within an omniscient threat and a maelstrom of masculine behaviors (Bolton 2011, p.65). during their transition. Located in crime-thriller genre, these films also challenge genre conventions in their particular ways, especially by following the female protagonists' views and by reflecting the characters' inner worlds during their transition.

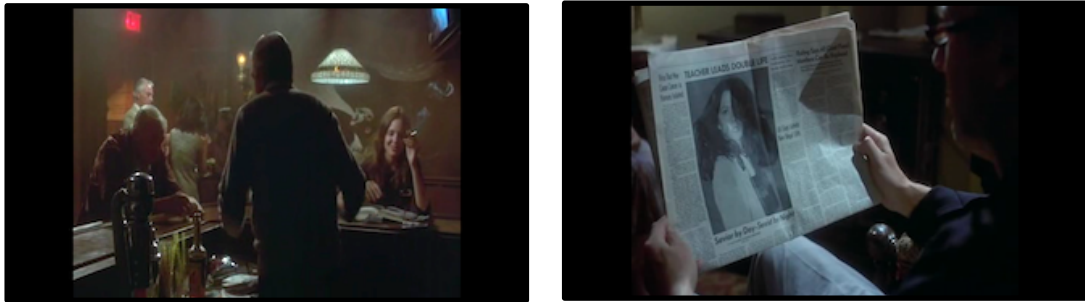
To begin with, Bree as a prostitute in *Klute* and Theresa as a bar cruising teacher in *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* represent examples of independent and liberated women of the 1970s, who are sexually adventurous, self-determining, single and financially self-

sufficient (Bolton 2011, p.69). Bree is a call girl trying to make it as an actress while attending auditions for fashion shoots (Lennon 2020), whereas Theresa is a teacher for hearing impaired students, who breaks with the norms dictated by her traditional family in pursuit of casual sex at nights. These two female protagonists are represented both as predators and victims, who are vulnerable yet strong, confused and enigmatic even to themselves (Bolton 2011, p.69).

Bree and Theresa reveal experiences of individual women in metropolitan cities, who do not have affinity to form a family while pursuing freedom in sexuality. Bree feels puzzled between a stable love affair and fear of the loss of her independent self (Giddis 1976, p.197), and in her specific ways she resists romance. However, male figures dominate Bree's life and provide the basic outlines to her. Thornham (2007) comments that in *Klute* the narrative of romance provides the film's structuring fantasy, but this fantasy is basically a male centered fantasy "which men impose on women and then accuse them of betraying" in a setting of danger in contrast to bright safe city of post-feminist imaginings (Thornham 2007, p. 35).

Same goes for Theresa of *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*. Theresa's multiple lovers superimpose her diverse criteria on forming a relationship. Theresa, instead, insists to protect her sexual freedom and singular state by stating "I'm not lonely, I'm alone". The character rejects the norms dictated by her job title, by her Catholic traditional family structure and by her unbalanced, dangerous, even severe lovers. Theresa is decisive on rejecting her motherhood skills too. She cuts her wombs in an operation not to get pregnant ever. She also loses her "proper" teaching job, when her bar cruising activities and drug usage is leaked to media as "the double life of a teacher" (Figure 4.7) by her former boyfriend, Tony (Richard Gere). Though she is surrounded by multiple discourses on how to live her life, Theresa resists to maintain her peculiar lifestyle.

Figure 4.7: Theresa barcruising and her pictures leaked to media



Source: Richard Brooks, 1977, *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*

In this setting, both Theresa and Bree are entrapped by dysfunctional and threatening men. Bree is followed by two men, the detective and the killer, whereas Theresa has multiple lovers who stalk, threaten, abuse or lie to her. When rejected or ridiculed, Theresa's lovers turn quickly furious and endangering. In the end, Theresa⁴² is raped and killed by an unbalanced man in her own house, whereas Bree conforms to promises of a steady relationship with detective Klute. In a way, sex and the city, though it connotes freedom, does not actually set free neither Theresa nor Bree.

Jane Campion's *In the Cut* (Campion, 2004) shares multiple similarities thematically with both of the films mentioned above. *In the Cut* is an erotic crime-thriller that includes neo-noir elements with its puzzled story, series of murders, romantic love affair, detective characters and noirish aesthetics. The story revolves around a single English teacher settled in New York, Frannie (Meg Ryan) who collects words in preparation for a book on slang (Bowler 2019, p. 95) with the help of one of her colored students. When a young woman is murdered and her disengaged body parts are found in Frannie's garden, Detective Malloy (Mark Ruffalo) visits Frannie for the investigation. A romantic love affair and sexual attraction develops among the couple. After a while, their relationship becomes troubled when Frannie's sister, Pauline (Jennifer Jason Leigh), is also murdered. Frannie suspects Detective Malloy since certain clues point to him as the possible executioner. Eventually, Frannie gets close to Malloy's partner,

⁴² The story of Theresa is inspired by the murder of Roseann Queen, whose body was found dead in her apartment in 1973, Manhattan. The media discourse surrounding Quinn's murder centered on her private life, particularly her sexual relationships. Inspired by her story, Judith Rossner fictionalized a novel and published in 1975 under the title *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*. The film is based on the novel (Tahamtani 2019, p.11).

Detective Rodriguez (Nick Damici), in order to solve the mystery and in fact discovers that Rodriguez is the actual killer. Frannie kills Rodriguez and unites with Malloy in the end of the film. The film's narrative oscillates between Frannie's fears, desires and doubts until she finds out the real perpetrator of the serial female murders.

Critical reception of the film ranged from great praise to hard criticism. One aspect that the film is disparaged by the critics was about the film's feminist propensity which, acclaimed to ruin the genre conventions. Lucy Butler (2013, p.9) argues that the contradictory comments on the film basically rely on the fact that the film is based on "an opaque female narrative perspective that refuses revelation", which also frustrates and provokes an unease within the serial killer thriller genre. Butler (2013, p.12) adds that:

If the thriller is 'no fun' when shot from the female/victim's perspective, then shot from a sexual, intensely subjective and yet opaque female perspective it is downright threatening. In the critical discourse surrounding In the Cut, monstrosity is located not in the serial killer or his genre, but in the 'grotesque' vulnerability of the female characters when they open themselves to genuine intimacy.

Thus, it might be stated that in fact the film challenges genre conventions by centralizing the film on ambiguity of female sexuality, desire and vulnerability of the leading character instead of relying on the clichés of female sexuality mobilized in mainstream cinema, especially in crime-thriller genre. Furthermore, Meg Ryan's leading performance had been censured as "miscasting", since the star persona of Ryan was mostly associated with romantic mainstream scripts that, for some, conflicted with Frannie's troubled perspective and sexually ambiguous role in *In the Cut* (Butler 2013, p.13). Hence, the film itself stands at the limits and on a perplexing point in film history, and revealed multiple contradictory discourses, or rather various *mansplaining*, on how a crime-thriller should be, or by whom a puzzled troubled female character should be played. Yet, *In the Cut* is fruitful at many aspects, such as the complexity of the leading character, her approach to issues such as sexuality, marriage, or love and her relationship to the city that only posits paranoia to the female characters, like it is in *Klute* and *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*.

To begin with, throughout the film, the city is portrayed as a landscape of paranoia for the female characters. Women are murdered, attacked, insulted and under a constant omnipresent threat. Driving similarities with neo-noir tradition and Pakula's *Klute*, Thornham suggests that Campion's city in the film is a "city of dark basements and penetrable feminine apartments" with its dangerous streets, where the color palette ranges from blues to greys (Thornham 2007, p.34). The city is not a familiar vision of New York, rather it is a cityscape of "detritus, subways, graffiti and dead flowers". Female victims, scattered disarticulated body parts, missing women and discourses evolving around them form the psychological landscape of the inescapable threat of violence imprinted on the city (Bolton 2011, p.83). Occasionally the urban setting is reflected as a dreamlike fragmentation (Figure 4.8) that guides the narrative into the interiority of such female experience. Butler (2013, p.14) comments that:

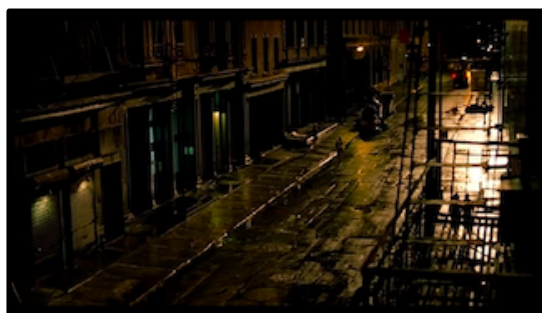
In the Cut presents a non-naturalistic New York full of menace, appropriate to Campion's self-conscious intervention in the thriller genre: she depicts the sinister, Gothic city that has been mythologized by narrative cinema, and makes us aware of the generic coding that anticipates female victimization in this space.

Figure 4.8: Dreamlike depiction of Frannie's relation to her surroundings



Source: Jane Campion, 2003, *In the Cut*

Figure 4.9: Portrayal of the city



Source: Jane Campion, 2003, *In the Cut*

In this setting, female characters are sexually active, at the same time bored and ironic; whereas males have the tendency to exploitation and provide a continuous threat of violence. The dialogues and gazes of the two male detectives very well exemplify the general tendency of insulting or ridiculing all genders. For instance, about the dead women's body, Malloy and Rodriguez laugh and comment that they can't say whether the woman was good looking or bad looking. They keep belittle queers, as "faggots on the street after men", call women they have affairs as "fat asses". Once Rodriguez puts that "all you need are tits, a hole and a heartbeat" for what he is anticipating in a relationship. In this patriarchal world of mansplaining and patronizing, a disarticulation of the "female voice" is at its heart (Bowler 2019, p.93). Bowler (2019, p.93) argues that Jane Campion is a master of tackling this matter:

The director's works revolves around women's often complex relationship with socio-cultural discourses and their articulation in language, whether in familial and institutional structures or in cultural and creative practice. In this sense, Campion's filmmaking continues a feminist tradition of exploration regarding female subjectivity, identity and desire as it is represented in language.

Frannie has walls to protect herself in her secure safety zone, home. She has limited communication with outside, she is distant to her neighbors, lives alone and self-satisfies herself sexually. Frannie is interested in language as a way of communicating with herself. In a way she reserves the language to herself; plays with words, reflects upon their origins, and works on her dictionary of slang alone at home. Moreover, she reads the poetry written in the subway billboards, where the camera follows the lines written with a voice over of Frannie whispering the lines. The camera also shows the words Frannie sometimes works on in extreme close-ups with an emphasis on her hands and her pen. Sometimes she connects the poetry to her surroundings in the subway. In a way, the character approaches to language not as a tool to communicate with other people, which is in a way fabricated by power relations; rather she re-invents and plays with a form of language that is strictly personal, which is also revealing her inner world.

Nonetheless, the interior spaces which are supposedly the female characters' safety zones are easily penetrable by the male characters. Frannie's house and personal things could easily be examined by detective Malloy, Frannie's sister is killed in her own bathroom, Bree's flat in *Klute* could be stalked by both the detective and the killer and

Theresa's house is broke in by her ex-lover multiple times. This penetrability also enhances the impact of paranoia and vulnerability in the films. So, the characters do not have a safety zone in reality and are actually at most danger in these supposedly secure places.

Lastly, in these three films, female sexuality is particularly on spot. Details about the female characters' sexual experiences are both discussed and displayed. For instance, Bree provokes her clients with dirty talks but expresses that she "never comes with a john" implying that she does not enjoy sexual activities with her customers, while Theresa starts her journey as a virgin, witnesses group-sex activities of her sister and finally discovers her own tastes. Frannie and Malloy share bed-talks on his proficiency in cunnilingus or Frannie is visualized while she is masturbating alone at home. Nevertheless, such emphases seem troubled for Bree and Theresa, since although portrayed as struggling independently, sexually active, and strong female appearances, the narratives of the films are bounded ideologically in the films' endings; Bree's comfort rests in finding true love, while Theresa is a victim of an ethos that punishes sexually independent women.

The films highlight the fact that female independency is often packaged with loneliness or desperation too. In that sense, the films are ideologically confusing. But, they are also prolific for feminist reflections, since they make explicit the patriarchal order and power operations from female perspective. The characters mentioned cannot avoid being attacked or stalked at nights, but they do not give up from their lifestyles and willfully go after the perpetrators to solve the puzzles. Not only various discourses that marginalize or punish sexual liberation, but also power relations operating and shaping the embodied experiences of the marked female bodies are made evident. Furthermore, the characters' inner lives and psychological conditions are deliberated by the cinematic devices. Last but not the least, these female protagonists are active and mobile in the city life, they question promises of romance and marriage in their own ways and play with genre conventions by portraying ambiguous and complex female point of views.

4.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the previous sections, I have summarized the feminist movements and waves with their essential theoretical alignments and major influential figures in initial feminist film studies with diverse agendas. It might be claimed that the early feminist film studies had much dealt with a construction of gendered difference via cinematic medium that positions female characters as less privileged, objectified, fetishized or punished in mainstream cinemas. Rather than mainstream, I intend to elaborate relatively art-house cinemas to see how they tackle embodied experiences of female particularity when they are alone and mobile. Following Irigaray's notion of sexuality of difference theory, I searched for how silence, sexuality, mimicry and interiority of the characters are displayed and functioned for the selected narratives of contemporary cinema. Furthermore, the characters' internal states are juxtaposed with the multiple patriarchal discourses that are putting pressure on formation of their gendered subjectivity in the selected films. In a way my theoretical stance lied in an intersection point where "Butler meets Irigaray" in the back of my head, during dealing with the analyses of the films.

In the first cluster I've examined the young runaways, which disclose much about the gendered sensitivity of mobility and discovery of sexuality at a younger age in life. All of the films emphasize a state of homelessness, transition, mobility and discovery of the gendered dimension of identities. Besides, the characters' inner worlds are expressed via haptic tools constructed by the cinematic language. An emphasis on touch, thinking and silence are used as motifs in these young adult female films. The films provide insights on testing and transgressing the limits dictated by discourses surrounding the characters, while simultaneously showing the female characters' inner worlds on handling such matters.

In the second cluster, I demonstrated how sexual independency is working in the films' narrative structure. It is seen that the psychological and physical landscape of the city provided paranoia and fear to the characters. Furthermore, home is not assigned as a secure place, so a state of homelessness again marks the films. Not only the female characters' homes were penetrable, but also their internal states, feelings and moods

were amenable. Multiple discourses that marginalize or punish sexual liberation are made explicit in the films. The characters' active sexualities and independency are on spot, nonetheless are portrayed as susceptible to punishment. The conventions of crime thriller genre is particularly challenged by *In the Cut*, since the tension lied not on the monstrous serial killer, but on the vulnerability of the female characters when they open themselves to intimacy.



5. CASE STUDIES

In this chapter, three contemporary films that premiered within the past ten years with their longest screening time to represent female characters outside alone are discussed in detail. Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin*, Sebastian Schipper's *Victoria* and Ana Lilly Amirpour's *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* are analyzed based on textual premises. Following an alien, a criminal and a vampire; concepts like gaze upon the city, sexual harassments, gendered experience of space and time, crime, underworlds, dark corners, lawlessness, justice, sexuality, empowerment, self-discovery, inner worlds, mimicry, feminine masquerade as well as multiple discourses surrounding the characters while engaging with the city at night are elaborated through the examination of the films' formalist elements.

5.1 UNDER THE SKIN: AN ALIENATED GAZE DISCOVERING THE FEMININE

Under the Skin (2013) is a science fiction film directed by Jonathan Glazer that had its world premiere at the 2013 Venice Film Festival. Many film critics celebrated the film; especially the performance of the leading actress Scarlet Johansson and her iconic presence in such a difficult performance that carries the whole film with little dialogue. Before *Under the Skin*, the director had shot two more feature films; *Birth* (2003) and *Sexy Beast* (2000). Though the film is the director's third feature film, he is more renowned for his short music videos shot during the 1990s for famed music bands like Jamiroquai, Massive Attack, Blur, Radiohead and Nick Cave.

The film's story mainly revolves around the transformation of the main character, the Alien, (Scarlet Johansson) and her point of view of observing the earthly existence of humanity. The Alien arrives earth on a mission, learns behaving like a woman and seduces lonely men in the evening hours of the city in order to transform the male victims' body and energy to an unearthly dimension. As she stays longer, she observes the world more, learns and imitates to be human, envies human beings, and finally at

one point she quits her mission. Then on, she becomes a female exile in the world and finally befalls a victim of male violence and faces a fatal finale.

The reactions to *Under the Skin* were oscillating between high applause and strong repulse. The script is adopted from Michel Fiebert's (2000) same titled novel, but as stated by the filmmaker, it is a free based adaptation. This also created some kind of dissatisfaction among the novel's fans. Some criticized the film because of the screenplay's loose, or rather, disloyal adaptation, but on the other hand some critics celebrated the minimalistic stylistics of the film, especially the remarkable sound design (Frelik 2014, p. 54) and distinctive cinematography depicting the alien world (Barr 2014, p. 53; Gorfinkel 2016).

The film was under development for ten years and the director worked with different writers before he finalized the screenplay. Glazer states that during the scriptwriting process, they did not work on refining just one script, rather they worked on the story first with multiple versions, then they finalized it, and then threw away many parts until they reach the precise script. The director adds that they reached the right "deepest intention" at a point.⁴³ To me, this deepest intention might be not solely focusing on the science fiction motifs, or adding details to satisfy generic expectations, but centering the film mainly on the transformation of the female protagonist, who is basically an alien discovering womanhood with a feminine masquerade. As Loreck puts it, *Under the Skin* is a science fiction thriller, chiefly focusing on the transformation of an alien seductress, who develops personhood following her formative contact with humanity (Loreck 2016, p.148).

At one hand, *Under the Skin*'s most appealing features are its simple storytelling combined with cinema verité techniques, at the other, these lively simplistic verité features are often contrasted with extremely dark strong visual compositions, low-key lightings and artificial electronic extraterrestrial sound design to enhance the science fiction thriller atmosphere of the film. Just like the technique of the film is split between

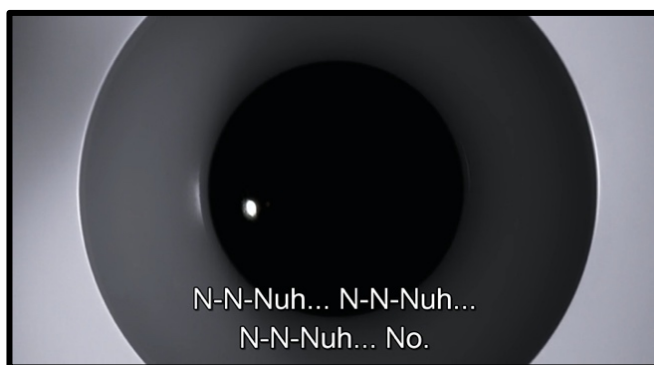
⁴³ *Crash Magazine*. [online] 2019. Jonathan Glazer's new film *Under the Skin* is out. <http://www.crash.fr/jonathan-glazers-new-film-under-the-skin-is-out/>, [accessed 23 July 2019].

realism, simplicity, minimalism, location shooting; and creating a darkish, alien world enhanced with thrilling sound effects, abstract minimalistic non-spaces, so is the main character. The lone alien drifter is also a split character, estranged and fascinated, she forms different relationships with these settings.

5.1.1. The Events

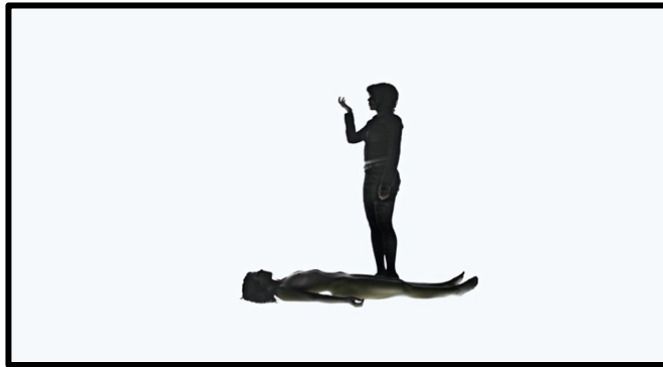
Under the Skin opens with a complete black screen combined with an electronic music soundtrack. Slowly, a white dot at the center expands on the screen and covers it, turning it thus into a white screen. Visuals of space and planets are accompanied by a soundtrack that exposes a woman's voice murmuring of letters and words "b ba ba, bebe, na, f, f, fell, fall, feel, falls..." like she is learning a new language (Figure 5.1). Following, we are introduced to our female leading character, the Alien, naked, wearing a dead woman's clothes one by one in a white abstract space without shadows and with enhanced foley sounds. She examines an ant that she finds on the lying woman's body, as if she is seeing such a creature for the first time in her life (Figure 5.2). Throughout the film, flowing geometrical circular graphics, void-like black and white non-spaces, and electronic music soundtracks are used to demonstrate the unearthly science fictional setting. Osterweil (2014, p.46) recognizes the Kubrickesque aesthetics and *mise-en-scene* of the opening sequences that reveal the film's science fiction components.

Figure 5.1: The Alien acquiring a new language



Source: Jonathan Glazer (2013), *Under the Skin*

Figure 5.2: The Alien examining an ant



Source: Jonathan Glazer (2013), *Under the Skin*

In contrast to such unearthly compositional material, most of the film takes place in today's world, in everyday locations of Glasgow city. Following the opening scenes, the Alien visits a crowded shopping mall, buys a faux fur jacket and a red lipstick while observing around the shopping habits of ordinary women. Then she starts driving in her van, observing the everyday life in streets of Glasgow, people passing by, eating, smoking, or laughing. She dives into crowds and observes the city in order to learn human behavior. Instead of a leisure touristic gaze wandering in the urban landmarks, an expressionless distant look examines the people in the streets, especially lonely men. Soon we are introduced to her agenda, that she is a seductress alien killer, preying lonely man on the streets and taking them to an abandoned house to lure the inner parts of their body, everything under their skin into a reservoir of black liquid. The preys do not die immediately but their bodies implode and only their skins are left. After this process, their bodily energies combine and flow in a red river, probably to another planet or universe.

To find her preys, the alien observes public places and talks to random strangers on her way. While observing their habits, in a flirtatious manner she asks them questions about their lives. Her sexy outlook, red lipstick, faux fur jacket, inciting questions and direct gaze upon men never escape the male counterparts' attention. The appeal of sexual availability and daring female appearance easily weaken the guards of men. For a while, the camera follows the alien's random chats with multiple random male strangers. Finally, she takes her first prey to the abandoned wrecked house. After entering the door, both the prey and the alien slowly take off their clothes while walking on a dark

surface. As the prey follows the alien, in a hypnotized state, he unaware slowly sinks to a thick black liquid, while the alien continues dressing off without descending. In the end, the prey is motionlessly trapped under an oil-like thick liquid, a space of complete silence, while the Alien dresses on and goes out to find her new preys on the streets.

At a certain point there is a scene that takes us to a shore. The Alien is aiming to start a conversation with a male camper swimming alone in the shore. Meanwhile, a family nearby drowns in wild waves struggling to save their dog out of the sea. The parents die in this incident, the camper reaches the shore fainted and the baby of this family cries in the shore left unattended. The alien hits the already fainted swimmer on his neck, takes him to the abandoned house and after a while the alien's motorbike guardian cleans all the evidence at the shore. Then the camera cuts to the infant who is crying and screaming scared all alone at night in the shore. This scene provides information about how the alien and her mate collaborate; while the audience also understands that the aliens have no empathy or emotions towards human beings but are dedicated to their mission in a very straightforward manner. The following day, the Alien listens to the radio in her van and hears that all the family members died in this incident. She seems to start to understand the consequences of her actions. It might be suggested that this is the first critical plot point in which the alien character starts making sense of the human condition and understanding the consequences of her actions.

In most of the scenes, the Alien continues to wander alone in the streets of Glasgow trying to find new preys. Her wandering in the van, circling in and out the streets, examining the surroundings in solitude and silence, and bringing the lonely men to the abandoned house structure the filmic narrative through several repetitions. She hangs around mostly in crowds, in the exits of football stadiums, roadsides, dance halls, heavy traffics, in order to increase her chances of encountering new victims. Yet, the more she wanders and engages with the city, the more she herself also becomes the target of random violence. The alien starts experiencing harassments of fellow drivers, random attacks of male gangs, or is intimidated by strangers in the dance clubs. She undergoes a particular dimension of female experience in the urban nightlife alone as a desired and desiring female subjectivity, while also trying to locate all these "normal" incidents in

her mind. Her sexual availability as the bait to trap her preys, also becomes her vulnerable spot magnetizing normalized male violence. But interesting thing is that the Alien does not know much on all these yet.

The audience is not introduced to her back-story, motivations, or her history with other alien mates. The character does not have a name. Such an emotionless distant figure one night encounters a deformed man with inborn scars. The man's distinct, or irritating outlook, scars and inert attitude somehow trigger developing emotions (empathy) towards him. They rather have a different dialogue compared to the previous preys:

The alien: You're very quite... So why do you shop at night then?

Deformed man: People want me off.

A: How?

D: They are annoying

A: What about your friends? So you don't have any friends?

D: No

A: What about a girlfriend? How old are you?

D: I'm 26.

A: When was the last time you had a girlfriend?

D: Never had one

A: Don't you get lonely then? You have very nice hands. You have beautiful hands. (stops the car) Do you want to look at me? I noticed you were looking at me before.

D: And?

A: I liked it.... You're not comfortable...

D: No, I just want to go to the Tesco's.

A: So you never think about it then?

D: Think about what?

A: Being with a girl? When was the last time you touched someone? Let me see your hands. Cold.

D: I have to go back soon.

This time the prey unwillingly resists, but the Alien convinces him to take to the abandoned house. However, suddenly she decides to release him and let him walk out the door naked. The deformed man walks around the house disoriented. Soon, the Alien's motor biker male mate arrives. He is depicted more like a guardian monitoring and following the Alien's actions. The alien mate finds the naked deformed man walking nearby and immediately gets rid of the "evidence" as he is supposedly programmed to do. This whole event is a turning point in the film, because the Alien understands that she has no point of return, since she released her prey and disrupted the main mission. She decides to run away from her alien guardian and ends up in a village. Interestingly, the Alien's sexy look slowly switches to a drifter or a vagabond hereafter.

In the village, the Alien endeavors to discover being an ordinary woman/human while trying to put her wrong past aside for a fresh start. Soon the audience understands that the Alien envies being human. She attempts to eat a cake but realizes that her body actually cannot swallow. Later she starts spending some time in a village house with a man who is very friendly and helpful. They cook, watch television together and listen to the radio while washing the dishes. After a while she discovers that not only, she cannot eat, neither can she have sex because she does not have a vagina. After a failed intercourse attempt, she examines her body parts in front of a mirror in order to make sense of her material existence as a woman (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: The Alien examining her body



Source: Jonathan Glazer (2013), *Under the Skin*

The next day the Alien leaves the man's house towards the deep forest. She drifts alone aimlessly in the forest for a while. Then she encounters a wood ranger in the forest, he seems friendly at first, they chitchat; but then he attacks her and attempts to rape her. She fights back. Because of the fight and struggle, at a point her skin starts peeling off. She sits in the forest sadly for a while examining her skin parts, her peeled off skin particles. She dresses out all of her skin slowly, calmly and thoughtfully as if she is saying goodbye to her earthly appearance. After a while, the wood ranger returns back with gasoline, he deliberately burns her like a witch. She runs in the woods in flames. The film ends with the guardian mate finding her ashes. He, as usual, has to clear all the evidence that would damage their mission.

5.1.2 The Protagonist: An Alien Femme Fatale Discovering the World

The alien protagonist of the film is a *tabula rasa* on earth. At the starting point, the audience does not know her alien character, nor her back-story, or her motivations for the mission on killing lonely men. The Alien evolves and transforms herself through her interactions in the world. Slowly, she learns how to behave like a woman, she imitates and then she envies humans. Finally, she develops to a human-like character without really ever becoming human. This alienated transformation of the character serves a *zero point* of examining the particularity female experience from a distance.

The film basically revolves around the Alien's actions and her occasional interactions with the side characters. The side characters are not long lasting, their motivations or back stories are not developed, but seen only in particular scenes while interacting with the alien predator. The side characters are all male: which are the Alien's guardian mate, the preys, the deformed man, the random attackers / harassers on the streets, the wood ranger and the *homme attrape* in the village. The preys are mostly working-class lonely wanderers of the city with heavy Scottish accent. The camera also cuts to ordinary people of Glasgow now and then, when the Alien's gaze is directed towards them.

The female protagonist of the film, the Alien, has no name or back-story. With her male guardian, she arrives to earth for a mission. The Alien has left her home planet, in a way her safety zone, her familial domain. Estranged with the unfamiliar, she looks around, examines the worldly existence, acquires a new language, enters to the hetero-normative language game of flirting, wears someone else's skin, steals strangers' clothes, and stays in an old, abandoned house temporarily used for their mission. The Alien is outside her safety zone discovering everything anew. The film portrays her unfamiliarity with all these things anew and reflects the protagonist's transformation, who starts her story as a typical seductress femme fatale killer and ends up being a victim of the patriarchal order and male anger.

The Alien is programmed to seduce, she wears a sexy skin and a sexy outfit; performs a desiring female subjectivity in the public and her gendered performance leads to her death. Throughout the film, she directly looks upon whoever she confronts with her sexy feminine façade. The female protagonist cannot escape the enmity of male anger and a fatal finale, similar to many femme fatale characters in the classical noir canon. She is a seductress alien killer in a science fiction narrative in an earthly realistic setting and the film structures the whole story on her point of view rather than the victims' struggles against her.

The Alien's introduction as a femme fatale character reminds us Wager's comments on "pastiche femme fatales". Wager states that in the late 1990s retro-noirs the femme fatale had little or no ability to drive the narrative in films such as *L.A. Confidential* (1997) or *Fight Club* (1999) and suggests a new term, "pastiche femme fatale" for such femme fatale representations. These pastiche or imitative femme fatales look like but do not act like a classic noir femme fatale, but they clearly function for the male gaze, as Mulvey famously puts either to be fetishized, punished or controlled by the male protagonists (Wager 2005, pp.6-27).

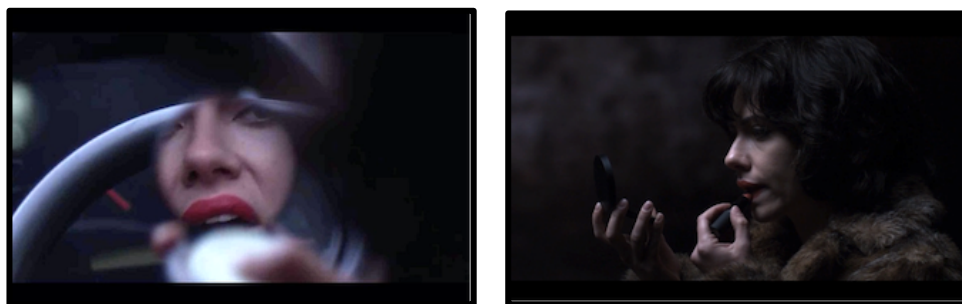
Though the Alien acts like a femme fatale, by killing lonely men, soon we discover that she is not aware of the consequences of her actions. Rather than a mastermind of manipulation, her state is more of a self-awakening on making sense of her actions. Therefore, the film conveys the story of a complex pastiche femme fatale figure, and her journey of becoming while discovering the city at nighttime. The director's comments also back up the claim that she is there as an archetypal pastiche appearance. In an interview the director of the film comments "...the gender story is in there because of the alien's femme fatale appearance, her red lips and black hair. Those are classic codes in sci-fi and film noir. They are archetypes. I made her an archetype, which was very interesting, but that's all"⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ *Crash Magazine*. [online] 2019. Jonathan Glazer's new film *Under the Skin* is out. <http://www.crash.fr/jonathan-glazers-new-film-under-the-skin-is-out/>, [accessed 23 July 2019].

In contrast to Wager's arguments, however, she is not a side story for male protagonist's actions. In *Under the Skin*, the alien femme fatale is *the* story. Furthermore, her actions are complicated because she is not fully aware of them; she is discovering both her body and identity as a woman. In contrast to the manipulative classic femme fatale; this archetypical yet pastiche femme fatale of *Under the Skin* is beyond the angel/whore dichotomy and the film mostly explores the character's transformation, self-doubts, and self-awakenings. Therefore, the alien protagonist is portrayed as a multilayered, complex and ambiguous character, who is in a transition.

In line with Mulvey's suggestions on voyeuristic and scopophilic pleasures of looking through the gazes constructed via the cinematic apparatus, in the first half of the film the Alien's body parts such as her lips (Figure 5.4), or her breasts are represented fragmented with close up camera angles. The camera follows the protagonist's legs tilting up or down to her body while walking in her tight jeans. So, the camera acts like a male gaze observing the alien's body parts (Figure 5.5). Moreover, her outfit in fake fur jacket and high heels, her extreme close-up shots of refreshing her red lipstick (Figure 5.4), all inform us that she is represented as the object of the male gaze explicitly in the first half of the film via the filmic medium. Gorfinkel adds that Johansson's mouth, and her heavily rouged lips become a formal motif of the first half of the film (Gorfinkel 2016, p.5). In a similar vein, Osterweil (2014, p.45) summarizes the situation as follows: "she is all lips and breasts, the very embodiment of male fantasy". Therefore, such scenes support the idea that the female character is portrayed as a spectacle (object) and men as the bearer (subject) of that look through medium specific tools.

Figure 5.4: Close-ups, the Alien wearing red lipstick



Source: Jonathan Glazer (2013), *Under the Skin*

Figure 5.5: The Alien is dressing off and the camera forms a male gaze



Source: Jonathan Glazer (2013), *Under the Skin*

One significant aspect in the film lies in the twist that the story tells the transformation of the introduced objectified female character. Therefore, she also becomes the “subject” of the narrative whose actions lead all the story. Her outlook or body are not only objectified for the male gaze, but also things anew to discover for the character herself too. The Alien discovers the limits of her new body, such as in the scene in front of the mirror, or in the scene checking between of her legs after a failed sexual attempt, or during eating a cake in the cafe. She discovers both the materiality and the limits of her new body, which is different from humans that automatically rejects or abjects to put anything inside it. The character’s body is only composed of a skin.

The Alien experiences the point of no return when she releases one of her preys, the deformed man. Although not clearly put, it seems like she develops empathy and draws similarities between their extreme situations. Gorfinkel (2016) states that the Alien goes off the rails of her directed task, is spurred on into some register of feeling, and developed some kind of kinship with another being at odds; while Osterweil (2014, p.48) recognizes that the film proposes a more radical identification with alterity as key to human empathy, when the alien refuses to develop empathy towards the infant at the shore but rather to the deformed man.

Finally, like the resigned male protagonists who wait death in classic noir canon, the female protagonist of *Under the Skin* resigns; she does not even resist death. She becomes more a woman than an alien, realizes that she cannot escape normalized male attacks. The scene of her execution, I would suggest, reminds us the witches burned in the medieval ages, whose social power were marginalized under religious discourse. As historically known, witch-hunts entailed prosecution, imprisonment and execution of thousands of women across Europe as a means of social control over women at a time of great social change (Hester 1992, pp. 3-4). During the period of transition from feudalism to capitalism, witch hunting and burning women served as an institutional regime of terror over all women, that also legitimized the new civilized feminine subjectivities who are sexless, obedient, submissive and resigned to subordination to the male world (Federici 2018, p. 32). Therefore, it might be suggested that burning and executing scene has genealogical connections to male domination and to history of violence directed towards misfit women.

To conclude, the Alien arrives earth like a *tabula rasa*, learns to mimic a seducing female subjectivity, while ends up as a victim of patriarchal violence. In the first half of the film, she is objectified for the male gaze, but her representation switches to an inert, lonely drifter who reflects about her existence in the second half. The Alien, who is outside her familiar terrain, finds herself caught in exile in the earth, and her story merges with the destiny of many women's stories that encompass violence, assault or rape in the finale.

The Alien is the "seduce and kill" type of woman, who is fearless and dares to look back. She does not know to hide herself from the gaze directed upon her. She is portrayed in a sexy outfit, who dresses up and wears make up before finding her preys. She uses her evocative appearance as her fiercest weapon. She quests at nights and her direct look up on men on the streets does not escape male counterpart's attention. Interestingly, this monstrous female is not portrayed as pure evil, but her point of view and her outwardly alienated state of being-in-the-world are used as a metaphor of making explicit what it means to be an outcast woman alone.

Barad (2007) states that *Blade Runner* is a film about being human through a lens of replicants, so is *Under the Skin*, it is a film about being a woman through the lens of a complex alien character. Her distant perspective makes explicit gendered social particularities imprinted on the materiality of the body and the skin. In *Under the Skin*, the audience follows the Alien's point of view while she is experiencing, examining, testing and experimenting with the patriarchy.

5.1.3 Time and Space

Under the Skin has linear time. The film starts with the arrival of the Alien to the earth with a particular mission and ends with her fatal finale. What is quite particular is that her journey on earth is deepened with certain scenes that show the character's self-awakening and the transformations in her inner world in relation to the spatial surroundings.

Figure 5.6: The alien's gaze on the urban landscape at night



Source: Jonathan Glazer (2013), *Under the Skin*

Here (Figure 5.6), the Alien directly looks upon the city and her gaze is emphasized with an extreme close up of her eye. Next, we see the crowds and flow of life in which a laughing woman is centralized. Then multiple images are exposed on each other. The passage of time is portrayed parallel to the character's recording and reflecting

processes as if she absorbs the interaction around her. The visual language of the film extraordinarily connects the character to her surroundings and finally making her a part of it by representing her in the middle of all these flowing overlapping images. This far it was stated that, the Alien is constructed as an object to be looked at for the male gaze, but with the help of these scenes that emphasize her gaze, she also becomes the bearer of the look. As an alienated distant flâneuse, the character examines the city, observes daily habits of men and women, experiences simultaneously being looked at and actively looking throughout the film and becomes a part of the crowds in her peculiar and distant way.

After releasing the deformed man, the Alien simply quits the job. Sequential to this critical turning point, the female protagonist's appearance drastically changes too. She no more wears make up or tight clothes that highlight her curves. In addition, her relationship to the surroundings is again formed with different stylistics. This time rather than her cutout body parts, her body as a whole is portrayed in relationship to the surrounding. The camera positions her in wide angle long shots, such as lost in fogs, wandering in the woods or walking down the paths. Loreck (2016) states that as the story advances, the film's visual language gradually changes that also indicates the awakening of the alien's thoughts. Through several long and static shots, these "meditative moments" emphasize the inner life of the character without any dialogue (Figure 5.7) but pure visuality (Loreck 2016, p.149).

Figure 5.7: Sleeping alien is overexposed to the forest that surrounds the barrack



Source: Jonathan Glazer (2013), *Under the Skin*

In another scene, the Alien wanders in the fog (Figure 5.8) probably trying to figure out her situation, the world and the existence. Her place in the world is emphasized again by

her gaze upon the landscape and a reverse shot of the foggy landscape. Such scenes also increase the strange, uncanny atmosphere of the film. Again, her journey to her inner world is emphasized through the visual language of the film by situating the character differently in relation to vast space.

Figure 5.8: The Alien's gaze on the vast landscape



Source: Jonathan Glazer (2013), *Under the Skin*

There are also scenes of flowing of images, used as a motif in the film which are fast edited under an electronic musical score. These scenes emphasize the character's position in her surroundings while interacting with them. Quoting from W.T.J Mitchell, Thornham (2017, p.7) underlines that instead of dominating space by linear narrative or time, in some films we find an emphasis on seeing and spatial relationships and these "breathing spaces" impart a different rhythm to narrative progression. In our case, these scenes function as defamiliarizing the familiar daily life and I suggest, refer to a looking subject with direct gaze (Figure. 5.8) and simultaneously a thinking subject with an inner world. These scenes also indicate the passage of time and the awakening of ideas in the Alien's mind out of her observations. Loreck defines the alien's transformation as "a predator who is driven by instinct to a woman conflicted by doubt and fear"; and the awakening of the alien's thoughts is given by the visual language of the film (Loreck 2016, pp. 148-149).

Rather than a discussion on lack, Irigaray emphasizes the importance of female specificity and particularity and suggests looking for new forms or means of representations, which exceed phallogentric discursive limits. Bainbridge (2008, p.21) underlines that such an "excess" that goes beyond the boundaries of representation might be found in style, camera work, editing preferences of the cinematic medium. It

might be suggested that the scenes that represent the Alien's doubts, observations, and fears in relation to space and time, provide such excesses. Rather than words or explanations, in those scenes the visual language of the film constructs the Alien as an exile female subjectivity alone spending time by herself. Her loneliness, alienation and inner world are emphasized via double exposures, fast editing, extreme close-ups and portrayal of her body in vast landscapes.

5.1.4 Gendered Experience of The Alien

Based on her investigations about female psychology, Joan Riviere (1929, p.306) has been the first to claim that womanliness is worn like a mask, as a "masquerade", which is used as a kind of defense mechanism in society. Mary Ann Doane (1999, p.138) rephrases the term and claims that masquerade "constitutes an acknowledgement that it is femininity itself which is constructed as mask, as the decorative layer which conceals a non-identity. Irigaray also deliberates the term. To her, masquerade is an alienated version of femininity which originates in a woman's awareness of a man's desire for her to be his other, which does not allow women to experience or discover their desire in their own right. Irigaray's suggestion to disrupt such a specular economy of male domination is through mimicry, through taking the feminine style and posture to extremes in order both to ridicule it and to show its foundations (Bainbridge 2008, p.120).

In her analysis on Agnès Varda's *Cléo from 5 to 7* (1961), Mouton (2001) discusses how Cléo (Corinne Marchand) is represented as a fantasy, a fetishized object, someone to be looked at, in short as a feminine masquerade in the first half of the film. Mouton indicates that the film creates the fetishized image of the leading character Cléo, in order to deconstruct it as the film progresses (Mouton 2001, pp .4-5). It might be suggested that the same applies to the construction of the Alien. The Alien's sexy feminine façade is constructed as a masquerade to be deconstructed as *Under the Skin* progresses.

Similar to Cléo's, the Alien's interactions in the urban landscape are critical for the built up and break down of her masquerade. The Alien is programmed to use a language game of flirting that implies sexual availability and represents a desiring female subjectivity during her interactions with the random strangers in the urban setting. She has a sexy outlook, a masquerade, which is also a non-identity that is solely created for male attention and desire. Yet, her alienated non-identity slowly twists to a gendered subjectivity through the embodied experiences provided by the city, which are materialized on her skin, on her façade. Moreover, the character's reflections and transitions in her moods are also expressed. Therefore, the film makes explicit the multilayered dynamics at play on gender identity simultaneously: first the discourses that surround the body, second the body itself and its fleshy materiality and third, the subject inside the body processing and forming herself out of her particularity.

One strong aspect of the film is that it deploys cinema *verité* techniques. The film documents streets and everyday life in a capitalist city center. Following an Alien's fascinated and alienated perspective, the audience also takes a distant and critical look to the ordinary aspects of capitalism and life. In the film, hidden cameras are used during shooting of van scenes, which enhance realistic reactions of non-professional actors. The night and the city and normalized male harassments are therefore tangibly reflected to screen via the cinema *verite* technique. Thus, the film is also a documentary on how ordinary men (Figure 5.9) react to an attractive alone woman in the patriarchal terrain. Romney (2014) summarizes the situation as follows:

He (the director) and DP Daniel Landin armed themselves with a whole arsenal of hidden micro-cameras, and had Johansson drive around and pick-up men she happened to see and who spontaneously interacted with her—some diffidently, some eagerly sizing up this seemingly up-for-it posh English lass, none of them suspecting anything until a production assistant ran up afterwards and waved a release form at them. Thus, the film becomes on one level a documentary about how these men react to Johansson, and on another, about how unsuspecting earthlings might behave just before being killed and canned.

Figure 5.9: A crowd of men walking towards the Alien



Source: Jonathan Glazer (2013), *Under the Skin*

Furthermore, the director shoots people smoking in the streets, shopping in malls (Figure. 5.10), talking on the phone, crossing the streets, begging, waiting a line in front of ATM's, selling fast food in their restaurants, bicycling, chatting, in short, the everyday life of Glasgow streets (Figure 5.11) following the alien's point of view of witnessing and processing all these new data.

Figure 5.10: The Alien in the shopping mall



Source: Jonathan Glazer (2013), *Under the Skin*

Figure 5.11: The Alien's look on the streets and everyday life



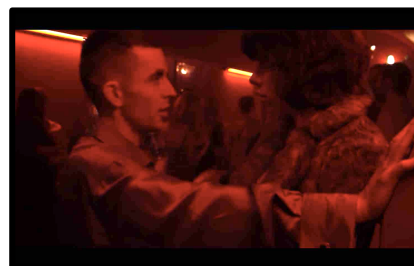
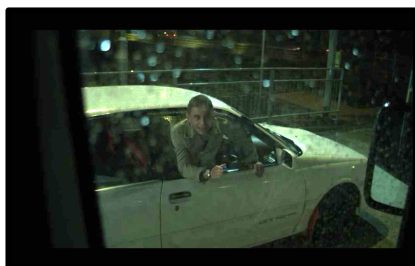
Source: Jonathan Glazer (2013), *Under the Skin*

The Alien mimics the other women in shopping malls; observes everything in this new world as a *flâneuse*. She is fascinated by the *phantasmagoria* of capitalism, she observes ordinary habits, dives into the crowds, watches people crossing the streets, spends time in dance clubs, in rush hour traffic, learns to differentiate between diverse lipsticks, perfumes, shoes. She is on the edge of capitalism, of the contemporary world and of the violent patriarchal order. She is both fascinated with the new, and also alienated, she feels outside, yet stands on the edge of the order. Romney (2014) reviews that:

The film's solitary traveller—to all appearances, an averagely good-looking young woman in jeans, a cheap furry jacket, slightly scrappy black hair—is seen walking unnoticed through Glasgow's crowded streets and shopping malls. At one point, she enters a crowded nightclub and merges with the riotous throng, lost in red light and the throb of techno. For much of the film, we see her driving around the city's outskirts, giving rides to young working-class Scottish men and engaging them in mundane chat, with an intensely flirtatious tone, adopting a sultry, somewhat posh English accent that tells them that, to say the least, she's from not around these parts.

Furthermore, the urban space is reflected both as a place to be discovered and yet as a place to be afraid of. Such an ambivalent portrayal of the urban space is close to feminine particularity of city experience. Though the protagonist is fearless, she slowly discovers the dim corners of embodied experiences in the city life. Predominantly, male violence is imprinted on the deadly siren's experience of space (Figure 5.12). The urban space at night time is not a space of unlimited freedom, nor a space for leisure or chance encounters but is a space of fear and violence. Instead of being friendly or welcoming, the nighttime settings and aesthetics represent the city as a dangerous place filled with random harassments and the documenting camera becomes the *flâneur* that follows an outwardly alienated female gaze experiencing them.

Figure 5.12: Random harassers at the nightlife



Source: Jonathan Glazer (2013), *Under the Skin*

5.1.5 Concluding remarks

In *Under the Skin*, the female character's being alone in the male dominated trope is used as a narrative hook, something enigmatic to be solved in the filmic story. But this enigmatic alienated state is twisted to a self-becoming narrative with the character's engagement with humanity, life and the city at night. Through the female protagonist's point of view, the audience experiences a different and particular female version of *flânerie* that is not solely reflecting a leisured touristic gaze, but a female gaze that is simultaneously fascinated and afraid of. The city space is reflected as a gendered space of fear and violence and the camera itself becomes the *flâneur* documenting this experience as it is. As known, de Beauvoir states, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman", so becomes the alienated pastiche femme fatale in *Under the Skin*. Her discovery of womanhood becomes a tough and dangerous journey. The audience follows the Alien's point of view throughout the film and monitors this particular experience through her alienated lens at three levels: the power structures that surround her body, her skin's and body's fleshy materiality and, a subjectivity under the skin constantly reforming itself.

5.2 *VICTORIA* (2015) FROM 4 TO 6: CHANCE ENCOUNTERS OF URBAN NIGHTLIFE

Victoria (2015) is a low-budget drama directed by Sebastian Schipper. The film is the director's fourth long feature, while Schipper is also renowned as an actor, especially through his role in the German cult movie *Run Lola Run* (Tykwer, 1998). Various film festivals across Europe had acknowledged *Victoria*⁴⁵, particularly the incredible performance of the leading actress Laila Costa and the cinematography by Sturla Brandth Grovlen. The film is shot in a 138-minute continuous single-take and the camera follows a Spanish woman strolling the streets of Berlin, chatting and flirting with a group of youngsters, who finally get her involved to a bank robbery with them.

⁴⁵ Best Direction, Best Film Score, Best Cinematography, Best Male Lead, Best Female Lead and Outstanding Feature Film in German Film Awards 2015; Reader Jury Award; Outstanding Artistic Contribution and Prize of the Guild of Arthouse Cinemas Award in Berlin Int. Film Festival 2015; Norwegian Film Critics Award 2015; Best International Film in San Diego Film Festival 2015; Best Film in Vilnius Int. Film Festival 2015, Best Female Lead in Gaudi Awards 2016.

The film covers 22 different locations in Berlin, around Mitte and Kreuzberg starting at 4.30 am in the morning. The final version of *Victoria* was shot after two major rehearsals and the final version, though debated, contains no cuts.

The film is a cinematic experience because of its unique technical qualities. Various critics and filmmakers appraised the film for its technical merits, however, whether the film contained invisible cuts was long debated after the initial screenings. For instance, Darren Aronofsky, claimed there were three hidden cuts, while Schipper defended the film by stating that such speculations started cannibalizing the authentic work he has mastered (Barnes 2016). Schipper comments that the “real time experience” provided by the film, is genuine and authentic, especially in today’s high-tech CGI times. The director claimed that the film is not a movie *about* a bank heist, but “it is a bank heist” itself. Schipper stated that finally with his fourth film, *Victoria*, he feels like a punk rocker, who found his own voice instead of a musician copying his favorite band (Lattanzio 2016).

The film is produced with a small cast and crew, shot in real locations in Berlin. The script is made of a 20 pages treatment, (or sometimes mentioned as 12 pages script) with no dialogues, giving space to method acting and improvisation for the cast and allowing the cinematographer to experiment. As a result, this low budget film provides a realistic cinematic experience with its one-take feature.

Victoria tells the adventurous story of a young woman who leaves her hometown, Madrid, for a brand-new life in Berlin. Victoria (Laia Costa) is an ex-pianist who runs away from the pressures of success of the conservatoire and leaves behind her dedicated life, unsuccessful career that was determined solely by constant daylong exercises and career measures. Without speaking German, she comes to Berlin, works in a café, and hangs out at nightclubs to make new friends with language barriers. The film starts few hours before morning (around 4 am.), when she encounters a group of drunken youngsters. The group consists of an ex-criminal named Boxer, a Turkish man called Blinker, a drug user who is constantly high, Fuss, and Sonne (Frederick Lau), who is going to be Victoria’s love interest. The group was not allowed to the dance club from

which Victoria was leaving. She decides hanging out with them and finally all of them get involved to a bank robbery. Victoria does not turn them down on this critical job and accepts to be the driver for the bank heist. They successfully finish the job and share a lifetime experience together. Soon the police discover their whereabouts. While the whole gang dies during the police chase, Victoria manages to escape and becomes the sole survivor of the robbery.

5.2.1 The Events

The film opens in a dance club and the camera slowly focuses on to Victoria who is dancing by herself. After dancing for a while, she slowly approaches the bar asking for a drink while suggesting to the barman to order one for himself. The barman refuses, she knocks her shot, and looks around. We understand that she is alone in the club, trying to make new friends, but did not manage to have one yet. No one notices her.

Following Victoria, the camera introduces to the viewers the other characters of the film, which are trying to enter the club while Victoria was just about to leave. The bouncer at the door refuses the group to enter the club, while Sonne stares at Victoria, asking if the club is entertaining, or if they could enter the place together (Figure 5.13). Victoria states she does not speak German. They all walk the hallway out together. The men, laughing and shouting, speak out loud in German. They seem drunk and having fun.

Figure 5.13: Sonne recognizes Victoria at the entrance of the club



Source: Sebastian Schipper (2015), *Victoria*

Then, Victoria starts riding her bike on her way to the café, where she works and planning to stay for the night. Sonne, the handsome outward and most sober member of the gang, stops Victoria and asks her to ride with them with his car. Soon we understand that they don't have the keys of the car they are fooling around. Sonne introduces himself and his friends, while Victoria hesitates for a minute by asking if Fuss, Blinker or Boxer are their real names. While they all were hanging around the car, the owner of the car shouts at them to leave his car alone and they all run away from the parking lot and start walking together.

While talking and walking, Sonne highlights that they are "real" Berliners and proposes to show to Victoria the "real Berlin" if she wants to. He explains that the real Berlin is on the streets, not in the clubs and he wants to show her "their world". Convincing Victoria to stay for a beer, Sonne and Victoria visit a supermarket, and realize that the owner of the market is sleeping. Sonne suggests taking the alcohol silently while claiming that he would make the payment the following day. Victoria realizes that he does not have much money. As they were leaving, Victoria steals some peanuts as well. Outside the market, Sonne tells his friends in German that she stole the whole stuff. The gang congratulates Victoria. Both the supermarket and the car settings emphasize the fact that the young Berliners are into petty crime, and Victoria whether consciously or out of her naiveté, affirms their attitudes, and is willing to get accepted by the group.

Next, they all start drinking on a corner at the street; they speak loudly, laugh, and dance. Then two men approach them, the two groups verbally threaten each other, and then Boxer attacks one of them. Boxer seems like a tense and aggressive person. Later, a police car circle around them. They decide to leave the street in order to smoke weed on a building's rooftop. Victoria observes all these events.

After sneaking silently to a building's roof, Victoria looks to the city from the edge of the roof and screams: "it is fucking great". Next, they all smoke pot. As Sonne tells that they all grew up together; Blinker and Fuss start talking about their adventurous memories, such as stealing trucks or pizzas. Then Boxer states he went to jail because of smashing someone very badly, while adding that "I'm not a bad guy, I just did a bad

thing”. Victoria again comes to the edge of the roof and Sonne comes nearby. Victoria spits down from the top of the roof to the street all of a sudden and Sonne watches her behavior. She seems to get relaxed, while hinting that she is also an adventurous, or rather kind of a “misfit” person ready to go further. She points at the café she works, and adds that she has to leave and rest for a while before opening the café at 7. Flirting with Sonne they together leave the roof, bike to the café she is working (Figure 5.14). Victoria seems self confident and happy.

Figure 5.14: Victoria and Sonne biking back to the café



Source: Sebastian Schipper (2015), Victoria

At the café, Victoria prepares some hot cacao for them and Sonne comes near the piano, while saying that he is a professional pianist. Victoria doesn't believe him; Sonne claims that Mozart is his uncle. He plays a few notes. Then Victoria says that she is the daughter of Mozart, and starts playing a recital for real. He watches Victoria's fingers and body gestures. He seems moved. Victoria says that she is a conservatory drop out, because she was not good enough. She had been practicing piano every day seven hours for sixteen years and she had a very hard life with no friends under high competition. Victoria cries. They get closer.

This moment of intimacy is interrupted by Boxer's call. Sonne says he has to leave immediately and meet someone right away. The whole gang comes to the café and Victoria watches them outside discussing seriously, while speaking in German. Then, Boxer steals a car nearby; the camera follows him behind from Victoria's point of view. They leave but a few minutes later they turn back in order to sober up Fuss in the café. Fuss pukes and faints. Boxer starts shouting aggressively that he made a promise and

cannot cancel it. They all speak in German; Victoria tries to understand the situation from the tone of their voices and body gestures. She figures that something is urgent. Boxer forces Sonne to take Victoria along, because they need a sober driver. Sonne quickly explains that Boxer has to do a favor for the people who protected him in jail that they will drive somewhere, and then take her back to the café quickly. Victoria accepts to be the driver, without knowing what she has been dragged into.

Together they all drive to an underground garage and men with guns welcome them. They search everybody including Victoria while irritating her. The boss nicknames Victoria as the “bitch”. The boss gives all the gang members a loaded gun, while claiming that he doesn’t force them to do the job. Boxer answers back that the task is beyond their capacity. Then the boss threatens Boxer that he has to bring 10 grands because he enjoyed his protection in jail, plus, he will keep Victoria, the bitch, until he brings the money. In short, they are all forced to commit a bank heist. They make a rehearsal in front of the boss with the guns. The boss gives them drugs to heighten their assertiveness, Victoria also takes some cocaine, and they all drive to the bank.

On the way, Blinker has a panic attack. They all stop for a while. Victoria calms him down. Boxer suggests doing the robbery alone, but Victoria insists that she will drive him. Sonne suggests leaving Victoria to the café, but Victoria affirms, again, that she will not disappoint them. They all hug each other, like a team warming up just before a big and stressful match.

They manage to finish the heist. Victoria drives, while all of them are very high and tense in the car. They throw out their coats, go back to the club from which they were initially rejected and all dance like crazy. Boxer and Blinker dress off their clothes and dance naked. Finally, Sonne and Victoria passionately kiss.

After having real fun, they realize that they might have forgotten Fuss in the car. As they approach the car, they see that policemen are searching it. They all run in panic. Soon, the policemen shoot Blinker and Boxer. Sonne and Victoria hide in an apartment in a building, they take an infant as a hostage to get out of the building as if they are a

family going out for a walk. They leave the infant at a corner nearby and head to a hotel. At this point, the viewers understand that Sonne is also shot. Sonne dies, Victoria feels really sad. She cries and then pulls herself together. She gets out of the hotel and walks in the streets all alone again heading to an unknown future.

5.2.2 The Characters: The Real Berliners versus the Expat

The leading character of the film is Victoria, a young ex-pianist around her late 20s, leaving her past behind. Victoria has left her safety zone, her home country, and came to a new city with language barriers. The film takes place in the Kreuzberg neighborhood, which is known for its immigrant and artisan-bohemian populations, a place that is also going through a gentrification process. As Graham-Dixon (2016) puts it this tension might also be felt when the drunken Berliners are refused to enter to a club in their hometown, while Victoria might be seen as the person, the expat, who embodies their hometown's gentrification.

Victoria's character seems very lonely. It is clear that she is motivated to make some friends in this space she newly inhabits. When they meet, Sonne asks her if she is happy here in a funny way; "are you real real *Glücklich* or a little bit *Glücklich*?" Victoria answers that she is a little bit happy, because she is here for just a couple of months, and does not know any one yet. Sonne seals the conversation by stating; "now you met us, you can be *richtig Glücklich*". Finally, because she meets some friends and shares something special at the roof of a building, she looks at the city, opens her arms wide and whoops. As Brady-Brown (2016) puts it she "longs to belong to the city" and sees her new friends as an opportunity.

Victoria's naiveté, or rather inexperience in life is always emphasized throughout the film. She is not very experienced in getting friends, or flirting, or nightlife party culture. She had a dull quite life dedicated to continuous daylong exercises and her mind was seized by the stress of high competition before she is dropped out from the school. Such atmosphere of pressure, in a way made Victoria feel very unsuccessful and useless in life. Victoria is also like a *tabula rasa*, someone completely open yet inexperienced to

potential dangers of life. Victoria cries to Sonne after playing the recital in the café so that it is understood that she had carried a heart full of frustration all along to Berlin. Such an inert, unhappy, unsatisfied and naïve character, step by step discovers as Mullen puts it; the “hard kernel of ruthless survivalism within herself” (Mullen 2018) all along the way with her new acquaintances she found in nighttime of the city.

On the contrary, Sonne and his friends represent the male bond and brotherhood of growing together in a neighborhood that might be thought as peripheral, underground and criminal. In contrast to Victoria’s loneliness, Sonne states that him and his friends are like a family. This small gang is composed of jobless members with criminal tendencies. Their marginality, or rather poverty, are emphasized in the beginning of the film when they are not allowed to the club Victoria was leaving. In contrast to Victoria’s elite highly educated, rare cultural capital of being a pianist, the gang seems consisting of school dropouts who used to hang out in a neighborhood with few educational or job opportunities. Soon we understand that this peripheral petty criminal street gang has issues with other gangs, they don’t have money and they are always in trouble. They aim to gain money through easy shortcuts. Because the camera stays with the characters all the time the audience quickly sympathizes with the characters, but it should be kept in mind that this group is inclined to shoplifting, car theft, and bad temper (especially Boxer has a violent vein). Furthermore, the normalized way of being for them is all the above. Such cultural contrast among the gang members and Victoria increases the tension that something might happen to Victoria.

Sonne is portrayed as a sympathetic liar. He makes up lies all the time but in a funny way and manages to attract Victoria’s attention while walking and flirting. Initially he claims that the car they chat around is his, then as Victoria states that she is from Madrid he claims that he has been to Madrid “like many times”, later he convinces Victoria that he will pay the money of the beers to the market the following day. Such a general habit of lying seems sympathetic to Victoria, convincing and flirtatious, which also makes the audience sympathize with such a petty criminal yet funny character. Brady-Brown (2016) suggests that Sonne constantly blags, re-imagining the city as his own possession, a character longing to retake the ephemeral city of Berlin back.

Victoria's transformation can be compared through examining two dance scenes of the film. In the opening scene, Victoria dances alone carefree, pretends she is fine, swinging by herself while checking the surroundings. Techno- beats are felt in the soundtrack. No one interacts with her, even notices her. She is all by herself trying to buy a drink to the barman for some friendly chat. In contrast, in the scene when Victoria and the crew finally come back to the same club after the robbery, they all loose themselves, they all jump like crazy, pour booze over each other, they hit themselves, even Blinker and Boxer dance naked (Figure 5.15). By the end of this dance euphoria, Victoria and Sonne finally kiss each other romantically (Figure 5.16). In contrast to the opening dance, this scene is filled with a piano soundtrack that dramatizes the scene and invites the audience to share the intimacy of the characters. Now Victoria is self-expressing herself overtly, with her dance moves she shows us that she is alive. She is not alone anymore, sharing a very close secret and a lifetime memory with her new friends. Maybe she found the love of her life. As Sonne suggests in the beginning of the film, now Victoria seems *richtig glücklich*. Such an embodied experience is expressed through the dance she shares with real friends formed through shared experiences and these people are actually, random strangers the urban nightlife brings. She follows some strangers in the crowd, like a *flâneuse*, and seems fascinated with "the nocturnal playground of seemingly infinite possibilities" (Romney 2016).

Figure 5.15: The dance craze after the robbery



Source: Sebastian Schipper (2015), *Victoria*

Figure 5.16: Victoria and Sonne finally kissing



Source: Sebastian Schipper (2015), *Victoria*

Romney also underlines that the unexpected transformation of Victoria and Sonne break with the genre conventions. He states that the rendezvous in a subterranean car park with the sinister boss throws the audience into a deep genre territory of crime, and as expected, nothing goes according to the plan. For Romney (2016) what is unexpected is;

The nuanced set of changes in Victoria's relationship with the guys, or the shifts in her character: from happy-go-lucky ingénue (an impression underlined by Costa's impish, Björk-like features) to determined urban desperado, and finally to something like a tragic opera heroine... Lau's Sonne undergoes similar changes – starting as an oafish lunk, but once in adventure, acquiring a muscular dash and a distinct Brando-esque charisma.

In short, Victoria discovers a male dominated territory, the underworld real Berlin. It might be claimed that the love and attraction between Sonne and Victoria unlocks Victoria's assertive character and transforms her to an outward woman. While flirting with Sonne and courageous enough to take responsibility of her actions; Victoria is transformed from a shy, meek, humble person to someone who passionately kisses, loses herself and takes serious decisions at the moment of crises. Victoria discovers the fighter in herself. Disappointed but empowered, she has the time of her life.

To conclude; Victoria actively leaves her safety zone, break her routine to start a new life, and is an epitome of perfect nightwalker who is open to what night in the city brings. She looks for company in dance clubs, has eager to change her current state of loneliness, is open to take emotional risks, and at the end she ends up lonely but transformed to a more self-confident, strong, independent woman. For some reason Victoria decides to spend the rest of the night with the gang, and as Romney states this

decision is “making us wonder whether she is hopelessly naïve, fearlessly open to anything the night will bring, or very possibly the craziest person in the picture” (Romney, 2016). Rather than clear-cut binaries, the troubled inert young-adult Victoria exposes various complexities, ambiguities and contradictions in her character.

5.2.4 Time

Victoria starts with Victoria dancing alone in the nightclub at 4.20 am and ends with her walking in the streets in the morning around 7.00 am, after everybody is shot dead, again all alone. The film has linear time and structures its narrative in real time, so the time it takes for the story to occur for the characters matches exactly the screening time. The film is shot in a single take that lasts 138 minutes. As Mullen (2018) states:

The one take conceit is both the cause of and the solution to Schipper’s problem. A conventional structure would have allowed him to compress the action and balance the film’s storylines more convincingly, but he is hampered by the strict temporal unity he has imposed on himself.

5.2.5 Stylistics

It is true that the temporal unity, and one-take challenge technically impose various stylistic decisions during the shooting and the production phases. For instance, the director started shooting with a 12-pages script, which is improvised by the actors into 138-minutes long film (Gemünden 2014, p. 144). Schipper wanted the actors to live the two-hour experience as real, wanted them not to be afraid of making mistakes, and asked them to go in and experience what they are going through. Schipper states that the film’s biggest challenge was for the actors to be present in the “now” entirely, without giving any breaks. He asked them to “freak out”, but they could not in the first rehearsals, which Schipper calls robotic. Finally, the director forced them “not to perform but go through all those emotions” and think that that’s the reality they are really in (Lattonzio 2016). So, in a way, such a commitment to moment and the one-take challenge enhances the realism of the film and the acting.

The second challenge imposed by the single take was on the camera. The filmmaker asked the cinematographer, Grovlen, to shoot more like a documentary style, instead of looking very controlled or stylized. The director asked for a film that is more punk, raw and intense. Since the script was composed of only actions without dialogue, the camera also had to improvise on how to follow the characters during shootings. Gemünden states that; “Shouldering a heavy camera, Grovlen follows the group from strobe-lit underground techno-club into night-time streets, squeezing into tiny elevators and cramped cars, and descending into a claustrophobic parking garage before chasing after the group as they run from the police” (Gemünden 2014, p.143). Such a concentrated plot is captured by the cameraman in one take that made him won the Silver Bear for cinematography in Berlin Film Festival 2015. No particular lighting set up has been used; it is whatever was there in the real locations.

It might be claimed that the fact that the camera is always very close to the characters make the audience feel their actions more tense. The camera circles, closes in, cranes over shoulders, jumps in and out of cars; shifts in and out of focus, at times shaky style resembles war photography and a rawness of pseudo-documentary style (Brady-Brown 2016). By pushing the camera slowly to the character’s faces, the camera also focuses on the actors’ facial expressions and emotions, especially the leading character’s, Victoria’s face to show how she experiences such an adventure in the nighttime in the city all alone.

Furthermore, the film mainly follows Victoria’s point of view. There are various scenes in the film that the camera stays with her, while recording the events from her perspective. For instance, during the heist, the camera stays with her staring at the bank door. In the scene when Boxer and Sonne discuss outside the café to convince Victoria to be their driver, the camera stays with Victoria shooting outside the café window over her shoulder, snooping the incomprehensible discussion of Sonne and Boxer in German. Victoria is the only character who stays with the camera from the beginning till the end of the film. It is no surprise that her character’s name is the title of the film.

As Bordwell and Thompson state, hand-held shooting technique originated in documentary filming, was common in late 1950s with the growth of *cinema verité* documentary. The freedom of less equipment gives the camera operator more freedom of movement and this technique is used when bumpy, jiggling images are preferred instead of smooth camera movements (Bordwell and Thompson 2010, p.200).

In *Victoria* the camera runs with the characters in the streets, shakes enormously in limited spaces such as in the car in order to follow the dialogues, while also giving breaks to catch poetic and dramatic moments in the film. The film was shot handheld without even using any Steadicam because the cinematographer “counted every gram” to run as fast as the cast, to be a part of the action like a documenting camera (Morris 2015). The cinematographer, (Morris 2015) states:

As long as I was moving with the actors, all the shaky, bumpy stuff disappeared a bit, because the camera becomes the part of the movement of the actors. My biggest fear was that the actors would leave me behind, and I'd have to catch up, which would really make the camerawork obvious. It is also very shaky at some points, but it comes together. When the drama happens and the actors become agitated, I move faster, and move more agitatedly too. It was kind of a symbiosis with the actors, kind of a method camera.

In terms of music soundtrack, a dramatic piano theme is preferred when the group and Victoria get closer, such as in the elevator-laughing segment or during the intimate dance craze shared after the bank robbery. It might be suggested that such a dramatic usage of music manipulates the mood of the audience to sympathize with the criminals. Since the camera is like a character, the music also makes the audience share the characters' emotional states and stays on their side.

Finally, the location shooting in Berlin, the raw-dynamic documentary style of camera movement, the minimalistic set design and costumes reflect the ordinary nightlife of Berlin. The film does not heighten any element of style such as music, costume, lighting, setting or make-up. Victoria wears no make-up, she is dressed very casually, and even the pimples on her face can be easily visible. All these signify a minimalistic and simplistic set design rather than a highly stylistic one. It might be suggested that all of these minimalistic choices enhance the lively aspects of the film.

To conclude; location shooting in real places, handheld shaky camera, method camera style, real time experience of single-take, method and improvised acting, daily costumes, a female protagonist with no make-up, all make the film look like a documentary following Victoria's actions, recording the city at night life. Even the cinematographer claims that during the scene when Blinker had a panic attack on the street, two Russian tourists walked towards the actors in order to help them (Morris, 2015). During the shootings, everything seemed realistic and minimalistic, therefore the film accomplished to provide real time experience to the audience. Such an embodied experience provided by the film is Victoria's experience of nightlife in the city drifting with newly met strangers.

5.2.6 The Construction of Space

The tagline of the film is "One city, one girl, one night, one take" (Gemünden 2014, p.143), which does neither mention the gang nor the crime aspect of the film. This one girl of the tagline encounters petty criminals of the city and gets involved to trouble and meets the criminal side of Berlin at one night before sunrise. It might be claimed that this tagline also summarizes the situation that one woman alone at night in the city itself is thought to be something interesting, catchy and intriguing by itself.

Strolling the streets of Berlin, the film encompasses many different locations *en route*. Victoria discovers the real Berlin with her new friends; cycling in the streets with Sonne, passing through the street corners under police surveillance, finds herself in the middle of gang fights, or smoking weed on top of random roofs, experiences the underground unlawful meeting spots, in short, she travels in various corners of the city. Since the film is shot in real time and in actual places, the audience takes a mini route to Berlin from its techno dance clubs to streets, from hotel lounges, to parking lots or to supermarkets owned by Turkish immigrants in Kreuzberg between 4.00 am to 7.00 am in the morning.

Sonne claims that the "real Berlin" is not in the clubs, but on the streets. It is interesting that Sonne and his friends were refused to get into those clubs, which he thinks is a

place for outsiders, like “Spanish people”. It seems like the real Berlin left for these jobless youth is the streets, rather than symbols of gentrification such as expat clubs, which they cannot even enter. Furthermore, for them, “real Berlin” is foremost the East Berlin. They are chanting “East Berlin” in the streets while walking, something that could be regarded as *Ostalgie*⁴⁶, however, the majority of the film takes place in former West Berlin. Only the part of the film involving the heist takes place in Mitte, which used to be East Berlin.

The camera represents the city as a dynamic space. Since the camera follows closely the action, establishing long shots of the city are absent in the film. Therefore, the city space is always represented in relation to action and as a background that the characters are passing by. The representation of the city by the camera is devoid of an omnipotent perspective that provides more information to the audience; rather the limited space provided by the camera positions the audience like an intimate observer in relation to the characters.

The city of Berlin contains police sirens, screams, gang fights, subterranean underground criminal garages, low-lit trance techno clubs and walls covered with graffiti (Figure 5.17). There are no Berlin landmarks shown in the film, any touristic view of Berlin is completely absent. The film does not show the domestic sphere of the characters; even the interior shootings are mostly in public areas such as in a café, in an elevator, in the car, or in a midnight supermarket. Brady-Brown (2016) suggests that there is no stylized version of the city in the film. In a way rather than how the city looks, the director focuses on how the city feels.

⁴⁶ In German culture, *Ostalgie* is nostalgia for aspects of life in Communist East Germany. It is a portmanteau of the German words Ost (east) and Nostalgie (nostalgia). *Wikiwand*, 2019, <https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Ostalgie> [accessed 23 November, 2019].

Figure 5.17: Berlin street art as the background



Source: Sebastian Schipper (2015), *Victoria*

5.2.7 Victoria's Gendered Experience

Two scenes make explicit that the city space is gendered for Victoria. The first one is when the whole crew initially meet. Graham-Dixon states that (2016) the audience is also feels some form of anxiety and worries about Victoria that these group of drunken men, “already irritated at being refused entry to a club, would take advantage of a beautiful Spanish newcomer”.

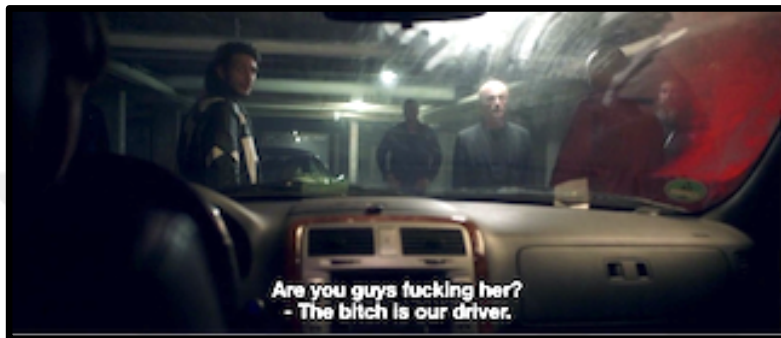
For a while, Boxer, Blinker and Sonne all of them flirt with Victoria and the audience cannot imagine what to expect from these men. Then a subtle agreement is made among the brotherhood that Victoria is Sonne's. He warns his friends, as if he is providing the necessary protection for her. Later, the whole gang, except Sonne, starts calling Victoria “sister”. An acquaintance provides some kind of invisible protection while Victoria is enjoying her experience of the city filled with curiosity.⁴⁷

The second scene is when the tough boss in the subterranean garage constantly humiliates Victoria. For instance, while searching her body he consciously irritates her by touching her intimate parts. In this scene, the camera follows the boss's hand, and then focusing on Sonne's face and his discomfort; both of which signify that in this male world, her existence is problematic. Later, the boss nicknames Victoria “bitch” while asking the men “are you guys fucking her?” A woman hanging with men at that

⁴⁷ Mouton (2001) recognizes that rather than old friends, the acquaintances found en route provide new ways of looking at the world and new ways of being in the city. She exemplifies the situation with Cléo's acquaintance in *Cléo 5 to 7*, Antoine, the French soldier Cléo meets and wanders in Paris together just before she learns her test results.

hour in such a place is assumed to be a bitch by the boss immediately. Later he states that bringing her is their problem during the heist. In a way, he sees Victoria a “problem” and a “bitch” or a half person, compared to the competences of the men in the gang. But all these assumptions are twisted when Victoria becomes the sole survivor of the heist in the end.

Figure 5.18: Multiple gazes upon Victoria in the garage



Source: Sebastian Schipper (2015), *Victoria*

5.2.8 Concluding Remarks

To conclude; Victoria completely opens herself to the random encounters and relationality of the city. She unlocks herself to new experiences for becoming someone new. In short, she transgresses the given, performs and transforms her subjectivity in the flux of relations. She leaves behind the quitter, but discovers the survivor in herself. She is fascinated with what she is discovering, with both the parts of the city she had no knowledge about and with her new criminal adventurous softhearted acquaintances. She is the type of tempted *flâneuse* discovering the underground corners and far edges of Berlin. She starts this journey alone, finds her acquaintances en route while ending up alone but profoundly transformed and self-contained. Victoria turns from a potential victim to a sole survivor, who pushes the limits of her space and her experience.

Thornham (2019) states that *depaysement* is a concept, which she suggests is the female equivalent of the Freudian uncanny containing both the profound disorientation of placelessness and the freedom of seeing what had never been seen. Such an embodied experience and journey is close to becoming that encompasses both fear and desire to

discover anew (p.5). Similar to Thornham's claims, Victoria's experience is filled with ambiguities, tensions, fears and desires. Rather than putting Victoria as a side character not susceptible to transformation, or as a spectacle, an obstacle in a male centered plot; the film shows her gendered displaced yet free experience of nightlife in the city through a minimalistic style and realistic documentary aesthetics.

Victoria's gendered experiences of urban space is both as "sister" and "bitch" in the patriarchal discourse. In a way, in the male symbolic, the tension provided by her existence in an unexpected place and a time is solved by giving her stereotypical nicknames, while entrapping her transgressed performance to a limited space defined by patriarchy. As Mouton claims, female curiosity – the desire to look and to know, is by itself transgressive and dangerous in the urban space (p.8). Night and city seem like an uncanny combination for a young woman alone. But the film makes its major twist at its ending, since Victoria is the sole survivor of the fatal criminal quest, they all got involved. Lastly, instead of showing the heist itself, the camera's stay with the female character all the time plays with action-adventure genre expectations, since the film portrays her perspective, follows her actions, conveys her feelings and builds an atmosphere of sharing her experience all the time.

5.3 *A GIRL WALKS HOME ALONE AT NIGHT* (2014): A VAMPIRE MAN-HUNTER

A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night (hereafter *AGWHAAN*, 2014) is Ana Lily Amirpour's black and white debut film that had won several awards in international film festivals⁴⁸. The film's tagline is "First Iranian vampire western" already denoting the hybrid character of the film both in terms of its genre and origin. Amirpour's Iranian parents moved to Britain after the revolution in Iran in 1979. Born and raised in the United Kingdom, studied film in California, Amirpour decided to make a film in Farsi

⁴⁸ Special Mension in Bucharest International Film Festival 2015; Revelations Prize in Deauville FF 2014, Best Cinematography in Dublin International Film Festival 2015; Bingham Ray Breakthrough Director Award in Gotham Awards 2014; Special Mention in Hawaii International Film Festival 2014; Citizen Kane Award for Best Directorial Revelation, Carnet Jove Jury Award and Special Mention in Catalonian International Film Festival 2014, *IMDB*, 2019, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2326554/awards?ref_=tt_awd [accessed 23 July 2019].

language, in a setting resembling an Iranian city, actually shot in southern California. A black and white vampire film intertwined with spaghetti western motifs, the film attracted significant attention for its hybrid genre and distinct stylistics.

The film exists in a twilight zone across nations, times, languages and genres (Kermode 2015). Defining her film as an Iranian fairytale, the director insisted on making the film in Farsi language while negotiating with potential investors, most of who suggested shooting in English (Bowers 2014). Having chosen Iran as the setting for the film, Amirpour wrote the script in Persian and hired an entirely Iranian cast (Abdi and Calafell 2017, p. 359). As Travis suggests a “Farsi language feminist vampire western new wave black and white noir sounds like a movie that is trying too hard” but the film manages to keep everything simple and feels not pretentious but effortless (Travis 2015).

AGWHAAAN’s plain story mainly evolves around five characters; Arash, the Girl, Arash’s father, the prostitute and the pimp, who are living in a post-industrial deserted place called the Bad City. The leading character of the film is Arash, who takes care of his heroin addicted father and his debts. Arash and his father are constantly harassed by a drug dealer / pimp. The pimp seizes Arash’s car for his father’s debts, and also mistreats the prostitute by cutting her share. Meanwhile, a lonesome vampire girl in black chador wanders in Bad City alone at night, stalks townspeople, and feeds herself only by men’s blood that deserve to be punished. The Girl kills the pimp after he mistreats the prostitute. Later, the Girl and Arash meet after a costume party, they spend some time together and the Girl does not bite him. They start seeing each other. After a while the Girl kills Arash’s father, who also treats the prostitute bad. Although Arash senses that she might have something to do with his father’s death, he does not mind, and the Girl and Arash drive away from Bad City together to an unknown destination for a new life together.

5.3.1 The Events

The film opens with Arash (Arash Marandi) who is picking up a cat from a garden. A high angle camera tracks Arash walking in the town until his car. Under a joyful music score, the credits pass while showing us the setting, the Bad City, passing through its factories, grand oil pulping machines and the valley of dead bodies.

Next, the audience is introduced to Arash's drug addict father Hossein (Marshall Manesh) watching TV and injecting heroin between his toes. Soon his drug dealer, Saeed (Dominic Rains) arrives requesting his cumulate debt. Saeed threatens Arash harming his cat. Then Saeed seizes Arash's good-looking vintage car. While Hossein faints on the sofa being high, Arash sees the dealer driving away with his car (Figure 5.19). Arash seems very upset; bare hand he punches the wall and injures his arm.

Figure 5.19: Arash watching Saeed leaving with his car



Source: Ana Lily Amirpour (2014), *AGWHAAN*

Then, Arash goes to a very big luxury house to work in the garden and do other minor repairs. The young adult girl of this rich family flirts with Arash, while informing him that there is a costume party coming up soon. As the girl leaves, Arash steals the girl's expensive earrings, probably to settle some part of his father's debts and take back his car.

Next, outside in a quite parking lot, the drug dealer Saeed, now the pimp, talks to the prostitute named Atti in order to receive his routine payment. They talk in Arash's car. The pimp asks Atti her age, implying that she is getting old to have kids. Such a

conversation twists to forcing her for oral sex in the car. The Girl (Sheila Vand) passes by the car and stalks them from a distance. She is fast, unnoticeable, yet felt. The Pimp gets frightened; he kicks out the prostitute without paying her share. He drives away.

The Girl leaves a market alone at night. She is covered by a fleeting long black chador. She turns back home, dances alone to the electronic music score. The room looks like a teenager's room with posters. She moves slowly with strange figures expressionlessly; and she refreshes her make up without a mirror. She is ready to go out.

Outside, on the streets the camera cuts to the Pimp walking alone. Then the Girl walks towards him, their ways cross. The Girl stares to the Pimp while passing by, her look does not escape the Pimp's attention. He walks a bit then turns back; the Girl is still staring at him. The Pimp invites the Girl to his place.

The Girl and the Pimp are at the Pimp's house. Under a techno score, the man takes drugs while the Girl checks the decor. The man touches her cheek and then moves his hand slowly to her mouth. The Girl's vampire teeth suddenly grow, the man sighs, still puts his finger to her mouth as if it is some kind of play or fantasy, and the Girl cuts his whole finger with her teeth with a sharp move while staring directly at his eyes. Then the vampire feeds herself with the Pimp's blood sucking on his neck and finally puts back his finger to his mouth. The Girl leaves.

Arash is waiting outside the Pimp's house to take back his car. While the Girl is leaving, they see each other and the outside door is left open, so Arash gets inside the building. He recognizes that the flat's door is also open. In the house, Arash sees the Pimp's bloody body, calmly checks around, searches for his car keys, takes them back and leaves the flat with a suitcase full of money and drugs. Arash turns back home and takes care of his father.

Under a typical spaghetti western music score, the Girl takes a bath in comfort, Arash hires a man to throw the Pimp's body to the valley of dead (Figure 5.20), the prostitute

refreshes her make up for the night, the father walks in temper for a fix and the cat observes him calmly all edited in a montage sequence.

Figure 5.20: The valley of dead bodies



Source: Ana Lily Amirpour (2014), *AGWHAAN*

In the next scene, Arash's father Hossein stalks the prostitute, Atti, on the street. Atti ignores him saying that she will not work for free. They seem to have a history. They both see the Girl from a distance. The prostitute leaves, Hossein stares at the Girl. The Girl looks back. As Hossein goes on to one direction, the Girl walks towards the same direction. Hossein stops, the Girl stops at the same time. He raises his hand, and the Girl imitates him like his mirror reflection. Hossein freaks out, runs away. After a while, the Girl follows a beggar young boy on the street and scares him while showing her fang teeth. With a mannish devil like voice tone, she states that she would be watching him until the end of his life and will come after him if he is not a good boy. The Girl skates alone at night, she seems peaceful.

Afterwards, Arash goes to the costume party in a Dracula dress. He sells pills (probably the Pimp's kit) during the party. Arash also takes one pill himself and gets high. He wants to kiss the rich girl for whose house he does gardening but rejected he leaves the party. While Arash is staring at a streetlamp outside, the Girl skateboards towards him. Arash says he is lost in this rich neighborhood; he holds the Girl's hand and realizes that she is very cold. He covers her with his Dracula dress to warm her up. Shocked by his relaxed attitude, the Girl does not know how to react. Arash suggests sitting on the street together for a while, because he cannot stand still. Instead, the Girl invites him to her place and carries him home on her skateboard. The Girl plays a rock song in the

house as diegetic music score. Arash rolls the disco ball on the ceiling. Fascinated with the lights of the disco ball and the mood of the music, they get very close. The Girl does not bite him. Instead, she listens to his heartbeat.

Later, the prostitute, Atti, walks alone at night. She scratches Arash's car with a key- assuming that it is the Pimp's car. After a while, the prostitute notices a girl stalking her. Finally, Atti faces the Girl, she asks what the Girl is after and the Girl suddenly gives Atti a handful of jewelry. Atti does not accept them; they go to Atti's house. Later they start chatting about Atti's job. Atti thinks that the Girl wants to learn the professional know-hows of prostitution from her. On the contrary, the Girl wants to save her, claiming that Atti looks so sad and desperate for so long.

The Girl turns back home noticing that Arash left a meeting note on her door. Soon, they meet outside a power plant, a place by an industrial setting. They listen to music from the car. Arash gives her the rich girl's stolen earrings, and notices that her ears are not pierced. With the Girl's request, he makes the holes and places the earrings. Meanwhile, the Girl hardly holds herself from attacking him out of pain. Arash wants to kiss her; she refuses and leaves stating that she has done many bad things.

While Arash's father Hussein freaks out for a shot, him and Arash have a fight. Arash asks him to leave the house, gives him lots of cash and the cat. Next, Hussein and the prostitute meet, Hussein cooks drugs, Atti dances and the cat watches them at Atti's place. Hussein injects to Atti heroin although she does not want to, they both faint to dreams. The Girl senses Atti's situation, comes to her place and kills Hussein while also feeding on him. Atti sees everything. They carry the body to a street corner. Arash finds his father's dead body the following morning. He sadly turns back home, packs his stuff and drives.

Arash comes to the Girl's house and asks her to leave the Bad City together. The Girl accepts. All of a sudden, Arash notices that his cat is now with her. Arash hesitatingly stares at the Girl, follows her actions while she is packing some stolen jewelry on the desk. Arash thinks she might be his father's killer but they don't argue over that. The

Girl, Arash and the cat all drive away at night to an unknown place outside the Bad City.

5.3.2 The Characters: Archetypes of Urban Space

The leading character of the film is Arash, a young handsome man with a James Dean-like style. Arash values mostly his highly stylized 1957 convertible car, he is bothered by the debts related to his father's heroin addiction and is an estranged moody boy, who cannot provide enough for his father's luxury habit via irregular gardening jobs (Bradshaw 2015). Arash seems lonesome. He is motivated to get rid of the burdens of the Bad City. He is into petty crime of stealing and drug dealing, and he wants to break free from the position he is stuck. Arash represents a kind of youth imprisonment that is surrounded by the circumstances related to poverty, to insufficient parenting and to a decayed and criminal neighborhood. He wants to break free from all these backdrops immediately.

The Girl's character is portrayed very lonely as well, but as Bradshaw suggests, she is not "tormented by the agony of living forever", like other vampire figures of the screen. Rather than being troubled by such existential crises, she knows what she wants (Bradshaw 2015), which is delivering her own justice to the Bad City that seems like a lawless zone, like in Western genre where there is no established rule of law. She experiences a kind of teenage alienation, spends time all alone in her room (Figure 5.21) listening to music; a room filled with pop icon posters and disco balls. She has a distinct teenage or rather hipster dressing and hair style covered by a long black chador. Such a jeans-wearing skateboard-riding vampire (Bowers 2014) as Kermode puts it might be thought as "an eerie relative of *Persepolis's* "Punk is not Dead" heroine" (Kermode 2015).

Figure 5.21: The Girl's room



Source: Ana Lily Amirpour (2014), *AGWHAAN*

The Girl floats in the Bad City alone on her skateboard, fearlessly staring at men who are doing bad things at nights. She is inexperienced in attaining friends, especially male friends. She feeds only by men, who mainly deserve to be killed. Since she has to feed somehow, she makes her selections on a kind of ethical principle that can be justified by feminist premises. She hunts men who are treating women badly, who are abusing them, kicking them, or doing things without their consent. She is fearless, dares to wander alone at night in such a decayed city, dares to stare back to men who are checking her out. In short, The Girl punishes the degenerate and bad men in the Bad City, who are basically thugs and junkies, while sucking their “dirty” blood at nights. Similar to the alien in *Under the Skin*, the Girl dresses up and wears make up before finding her preys (Figure 5.22). But different from the Alien, it is not clear whether the Girl wears make up to impress her preys, or more like a ritual of wearing war paint right before a fight.

Figure 5.22: The Girl wearing make up in her room



Source: Ana Lily Amirpour (2014), *AGWHAAN*

The Girl in *AGWHAAN* as a vampire examines the night and the city in order to provide justice in the patriarchal order. She is like an Amazon delivering justice from her own perspective, she punishes (also satiates her appetite) as she wishes with her own morals. She defines who is the prey to die versus the good to live in ethical terms, and for her production of evilness is always associated with manhood. She assumes an *a priori* evil that comes from men in general, an assumption, which in return justifies her killings that are necessary for her own survival. This simple dichotomy of bad and good that distinguishes the ones that deserve to be killed is cracked by her test of love. As she leaves her safety zone, her home, for regular “badman” hunting, she encounters her love in the streets, who looks like her, Arash leaving a costume party in a Dracula dress with fake vampire teeth.

The Girl learns to restrain and control her deadly instincts through this test of love. Such a process is triggered when she is wandering alone outside at night on her own. After meeting Arash, she slowly learns and discovers how not to bite, but to get intimate. In one scene, the vampire lets Arash pierce her ears and manages to cover her fang teeth that appear uncontrollably out of pain and the outcome is, as Robey (2015) states; a tender romantic and role reversing sequence that leads to the transformation of the character from an animal of pure instinct to a more humane state. She is no more the rigid straightforward punisher but is someone discovering her vulnerable spots then after. Through this love interest, the Girl discovers her vulnerable spots and transforms herself more towards becoming a woman. Her transformation is in a way, like a metaphor for the coming-of-age crises of an adolescent, who is becoming an adult woman while facing her first love.

Another character, the Pimp is a dealer and a tattooed troublemaker who abuses women and bully men. The Pimp is like the personification of the “bad” in this Bad City that the Girl is fighting against. His attitude and outlook are both so exaggerated that one can feel relieved when the character’s throat is tormented by the vampire. On the contrary, The Prostitute represents the “vulnerable” to be protected in this Bad City. She is abused financially, bodily and materially by men. She is nihilistically depressed, resigned and unhappy. The Prostitute has neither the will nor the power to change her

current situation. All she needs is a miracle or a superhero. The Girl, as the super-heroine saves the Prostitute from all these burdens, while punishing the men who cause all these mess.

It is argued that more recently, representations of vampires move away from monstrous embodiment of evil, to more of a site of identification, a potent source of sympathy who occupy an ambivalent moral universe (Chambers and Choplin 2013; cited in Abdi and Calafell 2017, p.360). The Girl in *AGWHAAN* is such a type of contemporary vampire with her vulnerabilities, strengths and moral ambiguities. Furthermore, as Abdi and Calafell (2017) suggest, unlike other female vampires who are often highly sexualized, the vampire in *AGWHAAN* “finds her empowerment in her quietness” (p. 363). She has an ambivalent relationship to her power and monstrosity. She is inert, yet open to change. She is strong as a vampire, yet weak and vulnerable like a teenage girl. Her story is more aligned to a coming-of-age story than a monstrous vampire.

5.3.3 Stylistics

The director, Amirpour, states that from the beginning she was imagining a black and white vampire film “stylized and tricked out like *Rumblefish* (Coppola, 1983)” (Bowers 2014). Defining her film as an Iranian “fairytale”, Amirpour wanted to construct the world of the film in a way that it is felt like being inside a dream. She claims that rather than relying on realistic premises, or reflect the world directly, she wanted to emphasize “real emotions” in her film (Bowers 2014). Such an emphasis only could derive from the mood of the film and that atmosphere is fundamentally created by the film’s visual style, soundtrack and costume design.

Foremost, the preference of a black and white aesthetics makes the color of the blood invisible, which distances the film from horror genre. Furthermore, during the shooting of the violent scenes, the director prefers to rely on the sound design and fast editing than showing the violence in detail per se. In this sense, the film distances itself from a horror vampire film. Instead, the wide screen high contrast black and white images combined with low key lighting enhance the film’s noir look (Brody 2019).

Bradshaw (2015) finds similarities of *AGWHAAAN* with what he calls “the hipsterized vampire genre of Jim Jarmush and Abel Ferrara”. Robinson also recognizes the film’s stylistic resemblances to Jarmush’s films by stating “Amirpour’s sharp black and white cinematography, brooding rock soundtrack and embrace of James Dean era cool recalls Jarmush so clearly” (Robinson 2014). The Girl’s hypsterized vampire character has lineage with the female protagonists of *The Addiction* and *Only Lovers Left Alive* in terms of playing with genre conventions, representing unconventional female vampires and portraying their existential and ethical concerns on humanity.

AGWHAAAN has a distinct choreography as well. Brody states (2019) that the director “ramps up suspense through the actors’ sinuous glides and dreamlike stillness”, and she conjures magic with the rhythms of a few striking cuts. So, the usage of both slow and fast motions, the interesting sound design with eclectic musical scores, the fast editing during violent scenes, costumes and the choreography of the actors all add up to the fable-like atmosphere of the film. Such a dream-like narrative is like a fable of an outlaw anti-heroine.

Moreover, the film’s soundtrack is like another character that stands on the film’s focal point that contain diverse pieces; from spaghetti western songs, to “dirty techno” or Iranian and British indie rock songs. The director states that she made separate playlists for each actor to get them in the mindset of the character. The director selected personally nostalgic songs for the Girl, while selected songs that have indie Iranian vibes similar to Pixies or The Cure for Arash. The Pimp’s theme music is “dirty techno”, and the old junkie father’s songs are vintage pre-revolution Iranian rock songs (Bennett 2015). Amirpour adds that she did not choose any songs after the shootings, but all characters are developed having a distinct music taste.

Knowing all these, one might suggest that the film is like a long music video clip with few dialogue inserts. The music soundtrack stands in the forefront throughout the film, and the scenes under the music score are frequently supported by the slow motion or close-up techniques in order to enhance the impact of the sound over the visual. Robinson claims that the film looks very stylish but empty, at times narratively inert

and sometimes gets lost in self-admiration and its own melancholy mood (Robinson 2014).

In *AGWHAAN*, another significant aspect of stylistics lies in the costumes of the characters, which are very particular. Inside her black long fluttering chador, the Girl is like a hipster with her hairstyle and Breton striped t-shirt. Furthermore, she travels with a skateboard in the city with her coolest impression and her room is covered with pop star posters, containing a disco ball and a retro record player. The vampire has distinct tastes.

The Pimp drug dealer Saeed is stylized in 1980s hip hop aesthetics, with a Vanilla Ice hairdo, Adidas track suit, heavy gold chains (Abdi and Calafel 2017, p.358). Furthermore, the words “sex” and “pimp” are tattooed on his throat and head respectively. Arash seems more aligned to American culture with his James Dean style, attitude and vintage car. (Figure 5.23). He suggests to the Girl eating hamburgers while stating that everyone eats hamburgers these days. Furthermore, to enhance the character’s cool attitude, his cigarettes dangle idly from his mouth all the time and there is an aimless frustration in his eyes (Robinson 2014) mostly.

Figure 5.23: Arash smoking in his James Dean style attitude and costume



Source: Ana Lily Amirpour (2014), *AGWHAAN*

Rather than a complicated one, *AGWHAAN* favors a plain and simple story. The emphasis is on the visual than the story. Moreover, distinct costume design creates rather cool but caricaturized and funny characters. In addition, choreographies with strange dance figures and eclectic selection of indie and western genre songs for the

music soundtrack all distance the film from horror genre to a kind of cool looking drama with humor. As Bradshaw suggests, “Amirpour found her own funny, smart expression for teenage-boredom loneliness, romantic isolation and a kind of perpetual emotional exile”. Therefore, stylistically backed up, the film is more about the adolescent crisis and angst of the Girl than her vampire doings.

5.3.4 Time and Space

The film has linear time. Because the female protagonist is a vampire, the film takes place mostly in nighttime. It might be suggested that night is synonymous with violence, assault, danger and fear in the Bad City and the vampire patrols the streets like an officer looking out for violent attractions and punishing those who are doing wrong (Godfryd 2019). The night of this Bad City contains drug addicts, pimps, prostitutes, vampires and thieves.

AGWHAAN takes place in a non-existing city in real life, in the Bad City. Although the film is shot and produced in southern California, the Persian language and the aesthetics imply that the story takes place in a Persian city. But apart from the head coverings and the language, there is little “to tie the story to one time or place” (Robinson 2014).

Bad City is portrayed as a dystopian place. The whole story takes place in the Bad City and the landmarks of this industrial city are grand factories whereby lovers meet (Figure 5.24). It is a place filled with oil derricks and lost souls (Leigh 2015). It has a mass open grave by the side of its highway, which is not particularly regarded by those who walk by it (Travis 2015). The city is portrayed as a place at the far edge, a place of lawless zone. The director names the urban space as “Bad City” and what makes this city bad are murder, drugs, prostitution, poverty, thievery, bullying and mistreating women.

Figure 5.24: Arash and the Girl meet nearby a factory



Source: Ana Lily Amirpour (2014), *AGWHAAN*

The camera cuts to city's industrial settings as visual inserts throughout the film (Figure 5.25). Smokey, noisy grandiose industrial machines work by themselves as if they are real monsters sucking the blood of the inhabitants of the Bad City. The film's sound design provides an atmosphere of entrapment in daily life in a deserted place. There are off-screen sounds of trains, oil pumps as well as enhanced inhalations of cigarettes, which in a way signify boredom, routine, and feeling stuck in a place where no one really cares. Such components are backed up with the aimless frustration expressed in the characters' eyes. They seem indifferent to what is going on in this deserted place. Such a dark atmosphere resembles neo-noir dystopias; wherein people feel stuck in a nightmarish society, time and place.

Figure 5.25: Industrial settings



Source: Ana Lily Amirpour (2014), *AGWHAAN*

The city contains two distinct recognizable classes. While the wealthy ones are enjoying the suburban utopia in their in-house costume parties; the ones facing extreme poverty

are prone to crime, misery, resentment, agony and depression in the public. It might be suggested that the industrial setting is emphasized as the source of such decay. Throughout the film; grand oil derricks, huge machines working with enhanced mechanical sounds, the volume of the smoke exhaled from the chimneys of the factories are emphasized both visually and audibly. All these materials are combined with the dark, wet empty streets of the city and the valley of the dead in the Bad City.

This deserted Bad City is portrayed like a place composed very few inhabitants; a pimp, a prostitute, a heroin addict, a rich girl, a distant observer boy, a handsome James Dean boy and a vampire-old teenage-experienced Girl. Except the costume party scene, there are not many other characters shown in the film. Interestingly, all of the characters are interconnected as if there are no other people in this place. Therefore, on another level, the film might be thought as constructing stereotypical urban characters, each of who holds a position in this industrial urban decayed city. In this regard, *AGWHAAN* provides an allegory of urban space with its stereotypical highly stylized, even caricaturized, urban characters. In this enclosed system, the prostitute embodies the gendered dimension of urban experience, while whoever misbehaves towards her is punished by the prostitute's guardian angel, the Girl.

5.3.5 Gendered Experiences of the Female Characters

Both of the two female characters of the film, the Girl and the Prostitute, have their particular experiences of the night in urban space. Since there are not many characters in the film, the Pimp stimulates the gendered experience of urban space for the Girl and the Prostitute. It is interesting though; the two female characters of the urban space are a prostitute and a vampire, a public woman and a monster respectively. The public space is open to them and the streets are already theirs. In a way, the only survivors of such a dangerous place are marginalized female characters. One might suggest that representing women at night as monstrous or marginal might sound problematic, but I suggest that every character of the film is as marginal, criminal and disobedient as these female characters.

Figure 5.26: The Pimp noticing the Girl



Source: Ana Lily Amirpour (2014), *AGWHAAN*

Chiefly, the scenes about the Prostitute's and the Girl's encounters with the Pimp make explicit the gendered dimension of nocturnal urban experience (Figure 5.26). The first scene takes place between the Pimp and the Girl, when the girl is walking alone at night purposelessly. The scene is as follows; the Pimp inhales from his cigarette, he notices someone passing nearby. The Pimp looks at the Girl. The camera cuts to a medium shot showing the Girl, who is walking towards the Pimp. The Girl makes eye contact as well, even stares at him. The camera follows the Pimp from behind a few more steps; he hesitates, but immediately turns back. The Girl has already stopped and is looking at him from a distance. She simply stands and as Robinson puts it patiently waits for the Pimp's next move (Robinson 2014). The Pimp walks towards the Girl slowly and he throws his cigarette. Still the Girl is staring at him. He checks on the Girl quickly, her body and her face and asks "now what?". He invites her by stating, "come on" while the Girl remains silent.

This scene reminds us the argument that the female experience of *flânerie* always includes looking and being looked at simultaneously. The Pimp assumes immediately that a woman daring to make eye contact and wandering outside alone at night is sexually available. Here, the Girl transgresses gender expectations because she returns the gaze, and stares at the stranger passing by. Her direct gaze is represented as inciting by itself.

In the second scene, the Pimp and the Prostitute spend time in Arash's car in a parking lot (Figure 5.27). Atti hands Saeed some amount of cash, the amount she made during

the week. The camera mainly follows the Pimp's actions. He humiliates the Prostitute first by implying that she is aging, and secondly more directly kicking her out of the car. He also complains that she even cannot satisfy him through oral sex. Finally, he does not pay the Prostitute. Saeed verbally and physically abuses, hits and throws the Prostitute out of the car. Here in this scene, verbal and physical male violence towards women is stressed. Interestingly, the camera is always outside the car, framing the characters behind car windows. Rather than the Prostitute, the camera follows the Pimp. Later, all these framing preferences are connected to the Girl's perspective. It is understood that this scene signifies the gaze of the vampire upon them.

Figure 5.27: The Pimp shouting at Atti



Source: Ana Lily Amirpour (2014), *AGWHAAN*

In both scenes the camera mostly follows the Pimp as if he is being stalked or watched by someone. Therefore, the Girl's gaze upon the city is represented as an authorial gaze that sees and senses everything, which reminds us the omniscient gaze of the CCTV operator Katie in the *Red Road*. The Girl is powerful and feels everywhere at home in this city, she is free to wander, she is open to randomness of the city and empowered in terms of delivering her own justice as she wishes. The representation of her experience is distinct since she is the only powerful character in this dystopian setting; she is the stalker, observer and the punisher. Interestingly, her being alone at night alone is enough to find her preys, since she does not have look for much, instead they approach her as a possible victim.

The Girl only punishes men in the patriarchal order. Disguised in a stylistic feminine masquerade, she reclaims the nights in the public space, punishes the men who are

making women invisible in this *chronotope*. In short, she preys on men who are preying on women (Robinson 2014). She chooses male victims, while aligns herself with women, which makes explicit that her otherness is not limited to her monstrosity but also to her gender, being a woman within the patriarchal order (Abdi and Calafell 2017, p.366).

To conclude; the Girl spends most of her time outside the domestic sphere, patrolling the streets. She dares to look; she has an omniscient gaze upon the city, just like a male *flâneur* she observes random strangers, street corners or might start following a random passerby but with her own agenda. This highly stylized Girl slides the empty streets of this dystopian Bad City on her skateboard and she is the perfect example of a *flâneuse* with the bearer of the look, an authorial unrecognizable gaze similar to a *flâneur*'s. She is a vampire warrior Amazon delivering justice and she immediately gets what she wants due to her confident and forward outlook and daring look. Her estranged state of being-in-the-world is used as a kind of metaphor of making plain what it means to be an empowered woman wandering outside alone at night.

6. CONCLUSION

This dissertation surveyed nocturnal flâneuses of contemporary cinema. Following female protagonists' trajectory, I mapped and formed my own collage to see multilayered relationships in cultural representations on female mobility. In this particular *chronotope*, inspired by the 19th century flâneur figure, I followed contemporary nocturnal flâneuses at nights in the city to reveal the dynamics of this gendered experience. I did not delimit my research with the quintessential masculine definition of flânerie, instead I wanted to examine what might be particular to it. Rather than historical, I took a genealogical position in forming my cluster of films, where I look at the cinemas at the relatively margins to see how discursive formations at the limits represent such an enigmatic theme. The films discussed showed the interwovenness of dynamics related to the spatial, temporal and gender, as much as reflected the discourses that surround female subjectivity and mobility that are also juxtaposed with the conflicts that burden the characters' interiority.

In general terms, the issues at stake were related to construction of gendered identities, of space and of time. While discussing the dynamics related to the spatial, I suggested that spatiality envelops all social relations, shapes the subjects and their relations with the world, and it is dynamically reshaped by their actions. The urban space has been habitually conceived as a male space, in which women are seen as disobedient marginal presences. The chapter focused on some exemplary female characters of international cinema and their experiences in public spaces, especially alone at night, in order see their share in the right to the city. The questions asked were related to the formation and representation of space through the cinematic medium, to the issues at stake at home, and to the function of mobility in the narrative. In addition, the characters' twisting positions as object-as-spectacle and subjects as social beings are conversed in this setting.

Female protagonists' participation to the city has transformative effects on the characters in the films *Cléo from 5 to 7*, in *Elevator to the Gallows*, and *Friday Night in*

which the main characters could be labeled as modern *flâneuses*. All of these characters give a temporal and spatial break to their lives and find ease to their personal and existential crises comfortably in the city. The characters' transformations and their inner worlds are reflected in each film, via Cléo's change in her appearance, through Florence's voice-overs of inner speech and Laure's daydreaming sequences and close-ups while engaging with her surroundings. Streets are not unsafe for these characters. The city is represented as a spectacle with its multiple possibilities and crowds.

Yet, urban experience is not always peaceful or leisured. The violence faced by immigrant female sex workers are exemplified with the films: *Chaos* and *The Unknown Girl*. The films very well demonstrate how violence becomes invisible and normalized in the patriarchal world. However, this state is questioned by the female characters. Additionally, in *Chaos*, both the interior and outside spaces are represented as dangerous for the female characters, where they become visible and vulnerable. Yet the characters invented their "liminal spaces" and occasionally used their womanliness as a masquerade to overturn the established patriarchal structures. Both films propose a gendered solidarity, and night in the city is the setting for the characters' encounters.

In the following section, rape culture is discussed through *Irreversible*; *Baise-Moi* and *Thelma & Louise*. These films make visible the atmosphere that govern sexual violence, harassments, male dominance, assaults, patronizing and threatening both in the households and in the public places. *Irreversible* represents a dangerous, destructive and chaotic city, stressed with dizzy camera movements. Alex's mobility and life choices are highlighted to be restricted in this world of male rage, destruction and anger. On the other hand, in the latter female bond films *Baise-Moi* and *Thelma & Louise*, the anger and frustration incited by rape events turns to a rampage beyond law. In unity, female characters turn to killing machines on the road, refuse to be victims, make the opposite gender their objects and spectacles, and go through major transformations during their mobility.

In the fourth chapter, particularities of the night are reviewed. It is suggested that nights include excess, transgression, deviancy, as well as provide settings to question the sane,

dutiful, clear and rational actions of the diurnal. Night in the city provides particular spatio-temporalities to petty criminals, detectives, stalkers, homeless, drunks, who are also the emblems of physical and existential homelessness (Beaumont 2015, p. 864). This chapter's gist was on how night-time behaves to the female protagonists, as much as how they in return consume the nights. It is found that the nocturnity brings a sense of unpredictability and contingency to the filmic narrative. The issues that came about could be enlisted in relation to sexual awakening, dark sides of the psyche, transgression of the diurnal, excessive intoxications, block-outs, losing oneself and of course danger and violence.

It is seen that a state of homelessness, or not belonging, is felt almost by every female character. Sibel of *Head-On* looks for freedom and satisfaction outside her houses defined by the patriarchal or heteronormative cultural norms. Similarly, Erika of *La Pianiste* breaks with the pressures of the house and her dominant mother, while transgressing the strictness of her diurnal at nights in pursuit of sexual pleasure. While Jackie of *Red Road* mourns in her house for her family and satisfies her voyeuristic pleasures behind CCTV screens at nights. Christine of *Variety* is trying to fit to the cosmopolitan city where she newly moved, while discovering her sexual awakening in a male-dominated sphere at nights. Finally, the misfit vampires reflect existential crises not fitting to the world itself. Furthermore, it is concluded that the nights also provide carnivalesque spatio-temporalities to the female characters, in a sense that all liquids of the body flow outside freely and uncontrollably.

Next, the spots are turned to gender issues. Following Irigaray's notion of sexuality of difference, I searched for how silence, sexuality, mimicry and interiority of the characters are displayed by the cinematic medium and function within the selected spatio-temporality. Here, the characters' internal states are juxtaposed with the multiple patriarchal discourses that are putting pressure on the formation of their gendered identities.

In the first cluster I've examined the young runaways, who disclose much about the gendered sensitivity of mobility and discovery of sexuality. All of the films emphasize a

state of transition, mobility and discovery of the gendered dimension of identities. Besides, the characters' inner worlds are expressed via haptic tools constructed by the cinematic language. An emphasis on touch, thinking, listening and silence are used as motifs. The films provide insights on testing and transgressing the limits dictated by discourses surrounding the characters, while simultaneously showing the female characters' inner worlds on handling such matters.

In the second cluster, the focus was on sexual independency. It is seen that the psychological and physical landscape of the city provided paranoia and fear to the characters. Furthermore, home is not assigned as a secure place, so a state of homelessness again marks the films. Not only the female characters' homes were penetrable, but also their internal states, feelings and moods were susceptible. The characters' active sexualities and independency are portrayed as vulnerable to punishment. The conventions of crime thriller genre are particularly challenged by *In the Cut*, since the tension lied not on the monstrous serial killer, but on the vulnerability of the female characters when they open themselves to intimacy.

On the other hand, the Alien in *Under the Skin*, is reflected as a *tabula rasa* on earth. The Alien's subjectivity is carved and embodied with social relations and encounters she had experienced. Social dynamics regarding to gender, space and time are imprinted on the deadly siren's experience on earth. Furthermore, her alienated distant perspective provides a criticism alike that of a flâneur's, not to the capitalist dynamics, but to the patriarchal order. The Alien's character has kinship with *Somersault's* Heidi in terms of discovering her sexuality anew on the road and *Vagabond's* Mona who is surrounded by multiple discourses and gazes all the time. Like the killing machines of *Baise-Moi*, the Alien's seducer and killer type is punished in the end, but this time burned like a witch.

Instead, Victoria in *Victoria* completely opens herself to the random encounters and relationality to the city. She leaves behind her quitter self, discovers the survivor in herself and transforms her subjectivity in the flux of relations. Victoria is fascinated with what she is discovering and transforms herself from a potential victim to a sole

survivor. The character has affinity to Erika of *Piano Teacher* in terms of putting aside the pressures of a dedicated life; and to the tempted flâneuses of *Friday Night*, *Cléo from 5 to 7* in terms of engaging with the city and finding her acquaintances *en route*. Victoria ends up her story alone, but profoundly transformed and self-contained. She is the type of tempted *flâneuse* discovering the underground corners and dark, wet far edges of the city at night like the female protagonists of *Variety*, *Red Road* and *In the Cut*.

Finally, the Girl in *AGWHAAN*, spends most of her time outside the domestic sphere, patrolling the streets. She dares to look; she has an omniscient gaze upon the city, like the CCTV operator Katie in the *Red Road*. She is a vampire warrior, who delivers justice like the female protagonists of *Baise-Moi* and *Thelma & Louise* in the patriarchal order. Her changing moods and inner worlds are reflected via changing musical scores throughout the film just like in *Morvern Callar*. The coming-of-age story also has similarities with Heidi's oscillating moods between childhood and adulthood that is successfully reflected in *Somersault*. The Girl is monstrous, yet her estranged state of being-in-the-world is used as a kind of metaphor for making plain what it means to be an empowered woman wandering outside alone at night. Her hypsterized vampire character has lineage with the female protagonists of *The Addiction* and *Only Lovers Left Alive* in terms of playing with genre conventions, since all of them represent unconventional female vampires that predominantly have ethical concerns regarding humanity.

Similar to Sobchack's claims on the lack of home as the structuring absence of noir films, the examination of the films leads to a conclusion that "a state of homelessness" marks all the films discussed in the study. The nocturnal flâneuses have no homes, or they have penetrable, tiresome, dangerous, stressing, entrapping homes or new homes that do not feel like homes. Therefore, a normative association that aligns feminine with the domestic is challenged by the filmic narratives. The protagonists leave their safety zones for adventure, take emotional risks and discover the possibilities in the male dominated zones of the urban nightlife.

The nocturnal flâneuses are reflected in transition, on a journey towards both themselves and to a destination ahead. A journey includes temporal and spatial change. All the characters are portrayed in a threshold in their lives. The characters' future orientations are embedded to the roads they are following ahead. They simultaneously handle power as a negative force (*potestas*) which prohibits and constrains; and as a positive force (*potentia*) which empowers and enables. Most significantly, the emphasis on female characters interiority and inner worlds contribute to widening female depictions in contemporary cinema. Especially such enigmatic and marginal characters, who are assumed to "look for trouble" are deconstructed by showing their returned gazes, ambiguities, desires, tensions and feelings via medium-specific tools.

On issues regarding mobility, it might be stated that the characters are represented as liberated and free as much as vulnerable to continuous male harassments or violence. They are surrounded by various mansplaining, objectifying gazes and discourses. Some break them through gender solidarity, some ignore them, some make male characters their own spectacles, while some overcome the burdens through their superpowers. Nevertheless, these female protagonists also provide transgressive performativity to fight against these norms. Sometimes they acquire masculine properties to fight back, sometimes they use their feminine masquerade as a weapon to trap their enemies, sometimes they use both. Therefore, they also exemplify twisting multiple gender performativities in the selected spatio-temporality.

By juxtaposing the characters' inner states with these multiple discourses, the films also challenge post-feminist sensibilities. None of the female protagonists are portrayed as neoliberal, rational, economic, self-disciplined, calculating subjectivities of the postfeminist era. Rather they are open to affects, to possibilities and to encounters. Their affects are formed instantly, by the encounters in the public spaces of the city at night. Rather than reproducing ascribed emotions associated with femininity, they form their emotions and reactions to life, in the flux, in action, in experiences and in relations. These characters open themselves to experiences, let power go through their bodies and subjectivities; and continuously relocate their positions in the world. Therefore, I suggest nocturnal flâneuses do not attempt to "know" themselves in their safety zones,

nor persist to be consistent; rather they display subjectivities always in process through experiments and relationality to the city.

Finally, the female characters' being alone in the male dominated trope, functions as a narrative hook, something enigmatic to be solved in the filmic narratives. However, in the films, this enigmatic state is twisted to self-becoming narratives with the characters' openness to new experiences and portrayal of their inner states via medium specific tools. Therefore, the films mostly play with generic expectations and narrative conventions, while extending the limits of the culturally intelligible in terms of portraying fresh female representations. As discussed, the female version of *flânerie* includes being spectator and spectacle, object and subject simultaneously; and these nocturnal *flâneuses* of contemporary cinema reflect these ambiguities and contradictions inherent to the female experience of the city at nights.

In conclusion, it might also be added that indifferent to the particularities of different localities, patriarchy marks female protagonists urban experience at night in the city equally. The cities represented in the selected films are not much emphasized with their landmarks or distinctive identities, but as social spaces that imprint gendered experiences. Therefore, the characters are represented as both in the edge of the city and in the edge of the patriarchal relations. Yet the selected nocturnal *flâneuses* challenge these power structures in their own peculiar ways and refuse to be mere victims.

For further research, I suggest that Turkish films directed by female directors and with leading female protagonist might be examined in regard to the problematics raised in this thesis, particularly on construction of space and female characters' relation to space and time. Especially, issues regarding home, or homelessness, might be scrutinized in relation to contemporary Turkish cinema. Another topic that might be further examined could be related to depiction of female sexuality in film history, especially through the female filmmakers' lens, again in the art-house cinema. This latter study could tackle issues on forms or means of representations, which exceed phallogentric discursive limits.

In my final words, I would like to refer back to Irigaray. In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Irigaray (1993) states “love of self is arrested in its development”⁴⁹. The moment I’ve read this sentence, I was captivated by it. Like Frannie in *In the Cut* who enjoys reflecting about words, this sentence remained with me for a while. The love of self beyond misrecognition, seeing yourself for yourself was a hard task. While following all these “crazy women”-they are crazy in a good way-, I took my long walks too, imagined myself in their shoes, tried to figure out their connections. These wanderers of the night have been a part of my life, and I am fascinated with their courage and I built empathy towards their self-love, bundled with their self-destruction, and their journeys towards a place as much as towards their inner selves. To me, this “love of self” includes a journey for yourself, with yourself, against all the odds that surround you. A journey that is risky yet full of potentials to experience your embodied being in connection to the world. I assume what knots all the nocturnal flâneuses together is that. Their journeys were fascinating. They are my heroines.

⁴⁹ The full version of the sentence is: “...(she) fails to emerge as a subject. No space-time is available for experience it. Traditionally spacing is created, or occupied, by man, child, housework, cooking. Not by the woman herself *for herself*. And when she is placed as an object by and for men, love of self is arrested in its development (1993, p.60).”

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APPENDICES

