

# The Representation of Female Characters by Women Directors in Surveillance Spaces in Turkish Cinema

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**Abstract**—The representation of women characters in cinema has been discussed for centuries. In cinema where dominant narrative codes prevail and scopophilic views exist over women characters, passive stereotypes of women are observed in the representation of women characters. In films shot from a woman's point of view in Turkish Cinema and even in the films outside the main stream in which the stories of women characters are told, the fact that women characters are discussed on the basis of feminist film theories triggers the question: 'Are feminist films produced in Turkish Cinema?' The spaces that are used in the representation of women characters are observed to be used as spaces that convert characters into passive subjects on the basis of the space factor in the narrative. The representation of women characters in the possible surveillance spaces integrates the characters and compresses them in these spaces. In this study, narrative analysis was used to investigate women characters representation in the surveillance spaces. For the study framework, firstly a case study films are selected, and in the second level, women characters representations in surveillance spaces are argued by narrative analysis using feminist film theories. Two questions are argued with feminist film theories: 'Why do especially women directors represent their female characters to viewers by representing them in surveillance spaces?' and 'Can this type of presentation contribute to the feminist film practice and become important with regard to feminist film theories?' The representation of women characters in a passive and observed way in surveillance spaces of the narrative reveals the questioning of also the discourses of films outside of the main stream. As films that produce alternative discourses and reveal different cinematic languages, those outside the main stream are expected to bring other points of view also to the representation of women characters in spaces. These questionings are selected as the baseline and Turkish films such as Watch Tower and Mustang, directed by women, were examined. This examination paves the way for discussions regarding the women characters in surveillance spaces. Outcomes can be argued from the viewpoint of representation in the genre by feminist film theories. In the context of feminist film theories and feminist film practice, alternatives should be found that can corporally reveal the existence of women in both the representation of women characters in spaces and in the usage of the space factor.

**Keywords**—Feminist film theory, representation, space, women filmmaker, women characters.

## I. INTRODUCTION

FEMINIST film theoreticians state that female characters are presented with passive stereotypes in Hollywood narratives. The individuals who will overcome the stereotype of passive female characters from the viewpoint of the feminist film practice will be the feminist directors who produce radical discourses. Many feminist directors, who

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presented examples of feminist films in the history of world cinema, have set an example for feminist film directors. Feminist film theoreticians dispute the representation issue and it is crucial especially for feminist film makers. The element of space is one of the elements of narrative, and it is an element that can generate sociological and political discussions regarding the representation of characters in spaces. That is why the narrative method analysis and the representation of female characters based on the space element will be examined from a feminist perspective in this article. Movies will be investigated with narrative analysis and based on feminist film theories, and therefore, will be examined within the frame of the concepts of plotline and film closing, which are among the narrative elements. In addition, the representation of characters in the spaces presented in movies will be discussed together with the narrative elements on the basis of feminist film theories through the concepts of steady space-dynamic space, inner space-outer space, which Dutch cultural theorist Mieke Bal used in order to interpret space in the narrative, and whether new alternative discourses are being created or not for the feminist film practice, will be questioned. The representation of female characters in the case study films will be interpreted by the panopticon concept which Michael Foucault cited from Jeremy Bentham, as well, the effect of the element of space on the story and the character will be discussed. Making differences in camera angles and camera movements in the representation of female characters with regard to both politics and esthetics in accordance with feminist film theory will have a different effect from the identification of the audience with characters in the classical narrative structure. That is why this study aims to examine the representation of female characters in spaces in the movies of women directors and to mount new arguments in the creation of different discourses for the feminist film practice.

## II. WHAT IS NARRATIVE?

As the beginning of narrative poetics is dated back to the ancient Greeks, Russian formalists, Anglo-American new critics or French structuralists, the problems of gender are told not to be among the distinctions or relevance of the field in the early period. This fact aims to determine the "classical" forms and the universal laws of Narrative theory, the essentials of formal typology and also to define the stylistic and structural factors that are understood to be iterated quite separately from thematic content, actual readers or in many cases cultural codes [1].

According to Bordwell and Thompson [2], narrative

consists of the chain of events in the cause and effect relation that takes place in space and time. On the other hand, plotline contains all the events of the story that are directly described. Bordwell and Thompson indicated that while watching a movie, the time of the story is created based on what the plotline presents. Events can be presented to the audience with flashbacks that are out of the chronological order of a story. The question that Bordwell and Thompson asked enables us also to question the issue of how the narrative is conveyed:

*"We can ask at any moment of any film: 'how deep can I know the characters' perceptions, emotions and thoughts?' The answer of this question lies behind how the narrative presents or conceals the story information for the purpose of having an influence on the audience."*

Characters function as the intermediaries of cause and effect in the narrative with their bodies, traits, manners, abilities, habits, pleasures and psychological impulses. However, all the causes and effects do not emerge with the characters in the narrative. The audience tries to establish a connection between events through cause and effect. The tendency to think why an event happened emerges as a causative motivation. While the plotline can present the causes, it may not give the effects of the story, which is why the tension in the audience increases more. The fact that the plotline does not give the effects provides a powerful finale. Regarding the time frequency factor in the film narrative on the other hand, a story event is presented only once in the plotline. If the plotline iterates a story event, it is generally stated that the plotline has the aim of transmitting new information [2]. The classical narrative cinema was indicated by Bordwell's definition as 'exceedingly open cinema' and also as the cinema that the cinematic language helps to explain the narrative. According to Susan Hayward, narrative is the telling of real or fictitious events. The duty of the narrative cinema is to tell stories. The basic motivation of narrative is men in the mainstream cinema; in other words, it is the one who actualizes the development of narrative. While the narratives in cinema follow the successful or unsuccessful completion of the male character of the oedipal orbit together with the 'order/disorder/order again' and 'order/puzzle/solution' triads, other strategies like repetition/diversity/contrast are also used in order for these triads to be coherent. In order to protect the integrity of the film diegesis, these strategies are discussed again during the presentation of the narrative along with the recurrent discussion of visual and discursive elements or they are changed or presented in such a way that they constitute a contrast. The films that have a different plotline from the classical narrative structure are observed in the contemporary narrative structure. The development of the story is quite different from the stories which the purposive and outside plotline outweighs. A story can be temporarily divided due to reasons like telling an incident or examining a character. Sequences are thought independently from the plotline. The relationship between the development of sequences and the sequences is as important as the relationship of the sequence with the whole story. An episodic feature is brought in the film by removing the connections between the elements of the story. The time

between the events has more importance than the story requires. Factors like less dependency on the linear development of time and skip development are utilized as the other features of these narrative structures. While the scenes that the audience expects to see are skipped, less important scenes for the story are presented, and this circumstance shows the movie devoid of continuity. Symbolic and metaphoric elements of which meanings are not explicitly expressed but which can establish meaningful connections are used. According to Hayward, in the cinema in which the narrative codes and agreements are disrupted, there are coincidences and uncertainties in the behaviors of characters, characters come into prominence rather than stories but there are no heroes, internal monolog is observed in the perspectives of characters and subjectivity has become uncertain (i.e. 'whose story is this?) are the features of Art Cinema [3]. Ann Kaplan indicated how the dominant film narratives and their classical forms represent women by men in texts. Kaplan made modifications in the representations according to current styles and stated that representations, which present accustomed models, are drawn. Kaplan expressed that the mother keeping silent in the patriarch order and being deficient in absence stem from the traditional basis of bourgeois, and this has to be disputed. Since the mother character is presented based on this perspective in Hollywood movies, in a sense it presents the refusal of the meaning of motherhood in itself. Kaplan also indicated that women have to consider the contrasts in women representations in the feminist cinema for their own future, and she suggested that the patriarch, the capitalist system and the contrasts that originate from the socialist patriarch system have to be thought [4]. Because the classical narrative cinema developed is based on male-dominated pleasure. Mulvey mentioned the relationship between the narrative film agreements and the audience. According to Mulvey, women are exposed for the view and pleasure of men who are the active inspectors of the look, and women arouse anxiety because they implicate castration complex. This anxiety is relieved with two kinds of escapes: the guilty object is trivialized or punished or saved; in the other method, either the fetish object is put instead of the guilty object or the presented figure is converted into a fetish for it to be relaxing rather than dangerous. When the question 'with which looks do the peeper and observer audiences identify themselves with the character on the curtain?' is asked, Mulvey tells us that there are three different looks. The things that enable the separation of peeper and observer looks are three different looks: the look of the camera which records the events that are prone to filming, the look of the audience who watches the finished product, the look of the characters to each other who are in the curtain illusion. The narrative film agreements were indicated to refute the first two, to subject the third and to have the function to consciously avoid the detractive awareness in the audience. Mulvey mentioned an alternative formula of audience and indicated that this audience does not feed on voyeurism but feminism, in other words it is an audience who is interested in avant-garde cinema [5].

### III. SPACE ELEMENT IN NARRATIVE

The space element in narrative is offered differently in classical cinema narratives and in art movies. In classical cinema narratives, spaces function only as the space in which the event takes place; on the other hand, they are presented as the element that has the feature of creating discourses in art movies and the ability of sparking debates with regard to cinema theories. According to Stephen Heath, the construction of the space as a connecting concept in classical cinema is the inference regarding the fact that the film gains its place as a narrative in the perspective of the audience, and this inference contains a continuous refinding process. The organizing, guiding, sustaining and reestablishing the space are the factors that reveal this process [6]. Bal addressed the importance of the representation of space in the story, and stated that sight, hearing and touching are perceptively in the content of the representation of space. The fact that space is related to the characters also enables that 'the living ones' transmit their feelings to the space. Bal mentioned that space has a wide range of functions in the story. On that sense, spaces are only the frame; they are the fields in which motion takes place. However, in many cases space is thematized. In other words, it becomes an object of the presentation itself. Thus, space becomes the stage of a theater play rather than a range of motion. Space influences the story and therefore the story is pushed into the background of the presentation of the space. Sometimes space becomes more prominent. Static space – whether thematized or not – indicates the fixed frame and incidents take place in this frame. On the other hand, a space that functions dynamically allows the movements of the characters; characters walk here, and that is why they need a path. They also need large areas; they travel there. Bal expressed that "while the inner space is insecure as it is the space in which restriction is experienced, outer space represents freedom and thus it is secure" [7]. If Bal's comments are brought up for discussion based on feminist film theories, then these comments exhibit the fact that 'how female characters are represented in the spaces that they are presented' reveals the importance of space in the film narrative. In this regard, while examining the relationship of the space with the character and the relationship of the space with the story, the concepts of outer space, inner space, static space and dynamic space and also these relationship types are interpreted, and the representation of the character with regard to feminist film theories are brought up for discussion.

### IV. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE TURKISH CINEMA

In its history, Turkish Cinema does not contain very much in the way of radical representations of female characters. In movies like *The Governess* (1919) and *The Paw* (1917), women stereotypes different from the usual female characters of the first years of cinema were presented; however, at the present time, these films are out of reach. Stereotypes of married characters with children, faithful women and domestic women spending their time with housework have been the characters who are the repeaters of social order. When the

female characters that make people question the patriarchal discourse are presented, they are either the women who pay the penalty at the end of the film or they are turned into a fetish object. Even if female characters are presented in such a way that they strongly and astutely exist in public spaces, they have become characters that are subordinated in the public space and pushed into their special areas. In films that can be labeled as outside the mainstream, female characters are observed to be presented different from the classical narrative structure in their representation in spaces. The reason of particularly examining the representation of female characters in the films directed by women in this article is to observe with a female perspective whether or not the lives of women characters are presented in such a way that they contribute to the feminist film practice. The space element has been an important element of positive discrimination by taking individuals to differentiation and creating spaces that belong to women and men. In a world where private space is attributed to women, some spaces have been associated with women. While threshold spaces like kitchen, dining room and bathroom are the spaces in which women can exist, the living rooms, which is the largest area of a house, have been the spaces in which men spend time. Films like 'Present Tense' and 'Until I Lose My Breath' present female characters in public spaces within the representation of them in spaces, and these films have shown that different ways of presentation will occur. The presentation of female characters to the audience as freely walking around people in public spaces and surviving on their own can begin the making of promising films for the feminist film practice.

### V. THE MOVIE 'WATCHTOWER' WITH THE NARRATIVE ANALYSIS METHOD WITHIN THE FRAME OF THE FEMINIST FILM THEORY

#### A. *The Story of the Film*

*Watchtower* (2012) is focused on the life struggle of a female university student who is exposed to sexual harassment by her maternal uncle. The character named Seher is raped by her maternal uncle in the house that she shares with him, and she hides this harassment because she is afraid of her family. Seher runs away from her uncle's house and starts working at the bus company that her uncle owns; she wants to earn money and return to university. The rules of the patriarchal order constantly create barriers to her effort to survive and these rules present Seher as a marginalizing, passive and chastising character to the audience.

#### B. *The Relationship of the Space with the Character and Story in Narrative Analysis*

Within the context of the relationship of the space with the character, the inner spaces that Seher is presented in the film are a room used as warehouse in the coach station, a room in her family's house, the kitchen, a small room in the guard building and the bus. The outer spaces are coach station, public toilet, road and forest.

Within the context of the relationship of the space with the story, the static spaces are a room used as warehouse in the

coach station, a room in her family's house, the kitchen, a small room in the guard building and the bus. The dynamic spaces are coach station, road and forest.

The character does not seem to belong to any space in her representation in neither inner spaces nor outer spaces because no space is a space that she chooses as her living space. She spends her life living in other people's spaces i.e. in the spaces that other people choose. Seher is attempted to be presented in such a way that she is in a struggle for being the subject as a character who tries to exist in public spaces when she is working as a crew member on a bus, and she ends up being passive, one who is reduced to being an object in the spaces presented to her. She is in a struggle for maintaining her life as a "sub(object)ivated" character. Her room in the coach station is a space in which she only sleeps. This space is a dirty and isolated space that is used as a warehouse. She even gives birth in this space. The room is located next to the dining hall in which passengers eat, and idle stuff is stored. Seher has a bed, book, note book, a pen and a few items of clothing. In this space where she tries to survive, she has no private space because nothing belongs to her. Since she has nowhere to go, she tries to live here. Seher does not have 'her own room', she does not have a life which she has created with her own choices either. She uses the public toilet outside the coach station to wash her underwear, and on the scene that this space is presented, Seher is the object of a male character's voyeuristic gaze. In her family's house, she does not have her own room. The dialogues of Seher's family about her reveal that she is restricted by her family and that they do not support her. Even when Seher tells her mother about the raped, she does not receive help from her mother. The concrete reflection of the fact that Seher is destitute of emotional support shows itself by the marginalization of her in her family's house. When she says to her family that she wants to move in with her female friends, she is told that this is "prostitution". Her mother thinks that a house in which a few single women live will not be approved by the social order and the women who want to live this way will be labeled badly. Her father criticizes this idea by saying "you never know who will come and go" and therefore he criticizes the circumstance in which there is the privacy of women in a house in their private space and they freely live their sexual lives. According to the perspective of the social order, the right to have sexual intercourses freely, the right to live with the desired person in a private space like a house, the right of free education and studying and the right to work while studying are given to men. A woman should maintain her life in only the private space that the man determines or shape her life under his supervision. The patriarchal perspective allows men all kinds of relationships and all the ways of socializing that belong to the public space. Women are seen as individuals who can be punished when they appear in a space where there is freedom and everybody feels relaxed. In the house where Seher's family lives, the living room, which enables a wide range of motion in the private space, is utilized under the domination of the father. The mother character is presented in the kitchen in parallel with the women stereotypes that we see in classical

narrative cinema.

Seher is seen by Nihat as she leaves her baby, to whom she gave birth involuntarily, on the side of the road, and starts preceding in a direction she does not want to go. Nihat does not let Seher leave the baby and takes her to the fire watchtower where he lives. Seher is taken to the cottage by force, and is presented as a passive object that is directed to an undesired life. Seher is a character who is forced to maintain her life within panopticon, who does not have her own space, who does not have privacy even when she is breastfeeding her baby in inner spaces and who does not have her private space; all these reveal a form that is parallel to the meaning of the concept of panopticon. The emotional deliriums that the character experiences in inner spaces have an impact also upon the dramatic structure of the film. Thus, the examination of what the character feels and her representation in the spaces exhibit the fact that what the character feels is influential on the audience making sense of the inner world of the character and on the dramatic montage of the film being powerful. In this sense, spaces reveal – with regard to the effect on the view of the audience to the female character – that in even the largest areas, the female character is allowed only this way to live within the borders that were determined by the order. The functionality of the spaces is made understandable in terms of representing the life of the character. Walter Benjamin indicated that the inner space is not only the universe of the individual but also the covering of him/her, and he advocated the fact that living in a space will leave marks on that individual [8]. Although inner space is described as a space that enables a limited range of motion, they are spaces in which clues regarding the true life experiences of people can be observed. The reading of memories and the past can be performed via inner spaces. However Seher does not even own her inner space by which she is represented in the narrative. Spaces do not belong to her; she does not belong to spaces, and she gives birth in an idle space where she cannot even leave marks of her true life experience. The ones who visit her in her family's house are also the ones who do not embrace her and run away.

The research of the spaces exhibits that Seher is presented as a character whose range of motion is restricted, limited, observed and who lives in spaces that she did not choose in the representation of the character in spaces. She has a static range of motion in the room used as warehouse in the coach station, in the room in her family's house, in the kitchen, in the small room in the guard building and the bus; likewise, she is the one with limited motion in dynamic spaces like the coach station, road and forest. The coach station, road and forest compose the outer spaces which can present the escape efforts of the character in the plotline. These spaces present the widest range of motion possible; however, these spaces are besieged by the patriarchal order from the viewpoint of the main female character of the story. Nihat wants to take Seher back to the house after he finds her in the forestland the end of the film, and this wish limits the mobility of the woman which has the potential to be effective. In this sense, spaces reveal – with regard to the effect on the view of the audience to the

female character – that in even the largest areas, the female character is allowed only this way to live within the borders that were determined by the order. Watchtower offers a clear reading to feminist film theories within the scope of the relationship of the space with the character and the competence in the sense of the representation of female characters in the public space/private space differentiation. Michael Foucault provided many arguments to emerge while he was interpreting Jeremy Bentham's concept of panopticon. How people are disciplined and observed in the usage of public spaces have been the subjects that Foucault has discussed with the panopticon architectural project. According to him, the panopticon model is a technology of competence that is suitable for solving the observation problems. This project will provide the easy functioning of the competence in public spaces like prison, school or hospital; it is based on observation and it ensures the following of what individuals do [9]. Bentham explains panopticon as follows:

*'Morals reformed - health preserved - industry invigorated instruction diffused - public burthens lightened - Economy seated, as it were, upon a rock - the Gordian knot of the Poor-Laws are not cut, but untied - all by a simple idea in Architecture! - Thus much I ventured to say on laying down the pen - and thus much I should perhaps have said on taking it up, if at that early period I had seen the whole of the way before me. A new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example: and that, to a degree equally without example, secured by whoever chooses to have it so, against abuse. - Such is the engine: such the work that may be done with it. How far the expectations thus held out have been fulfilled, the reader will decide.'*[10].

The fire watchtower in the movie Watchtower reminds the concept of panopticon that Foucault interpreted. The tower is a place that belongs to public space, and it is the concrete form of competence. While the watchman follows from the tower what is going on in the forest with his binoculars, he informs the headquarters in case of danger. While the competence continues its ongoing mechanism with the officials it assigns to public spaces, it chooses mostly men to be in charge in these areas. The watchman in the movie is the character Nihat. He is the bearer of the rules of the competence and the provider of the continuity of the social order. The main character of the movie Seher, on the other hand, is a character who struggles to maintain her life under the enforcement of the competence and the social order, and who tries to cope with all kinds of difficulties on her own. In the forest where everybody can breathe freely, Seher can merely maintain her life in a tower because now she has a baby whom she has to breastfeed and who does not have a father. Moreover, even though she told her mother the circumstance, she did not receive help from her and she is on her own. While Nihat lives on the top floor of the tower, he gave Seher and her baby the ground floor. From above, Nihat looks downstairs with a piece of wood opening downwards, thus he controls Seher. Seher's look upwards is shown with high-angle shot; it is like the defenseless look of the subordinate to the competence in the

panopticon, therefore the audience sees the victimhood and resigned person in this scene. Nihat lives upstairs, helps her, saves her in his opinion, and takes her under his protection. He goes to the city, buys things for her and the baby, and takes care of them. The schema of the elementary family, which the order requests, which is composed of the mother, father and the child and in which the father has dominance, is created in the fire watchtower. The mother is the one who breastfeeds her baby at home, goes to the kitchen and boils milk, contents herself with the things that are bought for her and does not oppose the competence. The competence watches her from the top of the panopticon.

Seher is the one who is observed, raped, dominated, marginalized by her family and suffered bodily by her maternal uncle. The circumstance that is to be discussed in the narrative in the representation of the character with regard to the feminist film theory is the fact that the rescuer of the female character, whose body and life is harmed, is provided again by a male character. The film transfers the troubles, problems and pains of the female character to the audience, and the fact that Seher is tried to be brought back to life and she is embraced by a man in the movie iterates the continuation of the patriarchal order.

Doane stated that the incidence that women are shown deficient and inadequate as an object in the cinema is claimed by the feminist film theory [11]. While she was discussing this claim of hers, she exemplified the films of the classical narrative cinema and interpreted them. In that case the films outside the mainstream should get out of the codes of the classical narrative structure and enable the presentation of the representations of new and alternative female characters to the audience. As a film outside the mainstream, the movie Watchtower presents the Seher character as a character who can never reveal her state of being a subject in the representation of a female character. While the director is presenting Seher's body to the audience, she presented the body with the point of view of a woman director. While suffering during pregnancy, during the delivery, while she is breastfeeding her baby and being naked while taking a bath, Seher's body is not presented towards pleasure. The audience witnessed Seher's pain and her feelings of motherhood. On the scene that she is presented naked, the baby cries and Seher's crying face is shown; therefore, reflecting her negative feelings for her body; this breaks the voyeuristic and scopophilic points of view of the audience who takes pleasure from seeing the exposed body of a woman. In this sense, the presentation of woman body with regard to the feminist film practice is a concrete example of the fact that alternative methods can exist in the presentation of a body and it can be done without the pleasure of the masculine look. Stephen Pierce expressed that the presentation of woman in movies gives an opportunity to tell the male audiences the mystery of the women sexuality which the male audiences can never reach [12]. Even though in this film there is the scene in which the woman's body is presented naked in the representation of the female character, an attempt is made to show the pain of the character and the woman taking a dislike to her body

rather than the mystery of the exposed body and sexuality of woman. The reasons for Seher taking a dislike to her body are the bearers of the patriarchal order.

Women have restrictions in their lives, and what are more desperate than these restrictions are the facts that violence against women and keeping silent about it are viewed as legitimate. As a marginal who is suffered under the patriarchal system and is ignored by that system, Seher has remained passive against violence and is obliged to live her passiveness in such a way that it shapes her life. In the film narrative, Seher is presented with her despair and victimhood in her representation in the differentiations of inner space/outer space, dynamic space/static space and public space/private space.

Irigaray associated the female body with language and discourse and conceptualized it; however, she did that independent from the penis/missing dichotomy [13]. In the film, the body of the female character is dominated, men, who dominate with regard to discourse, cannot be questioned according to the rules of the patriarchal order and even the mother keeps silent. No solution is achieved against the damage brought to the woman in abstract and concrete ways. The mother character, who is a member of the lower-middle class because of the judgments of the social order, cannot object to the violence committed to her daughter because she knows that the possible developments after the event is heard will give a bad name to her family. In addition to providing the development and continuation of subordination, the increase of other incidents of victimhood is enabled as well. The symbolic stage brings the law of the father and it is the stage at which the child goes into the language. At this stage, the child codes whatever she/he learns and however she/he learns it. The codes of classical cinema serve the law of the father that the symbolic law serves.

The character Seher in the movie Watchtower is a character that is presented both as a mother and an alternative, and she is a character who cannot be the subject of the patriarchal language. Luce Irigaray suggested women the ways of building their own subjectivity. She indicated that women need an eternity, and stated that the way to create this is creating the female distinctness as supreme/divine distinctness [14]. If the point of view of Irigaray is used as base, the way to definitive expressions in which the woman is affirmed as a subject will be opened instead of the attributions for women who are imperfect in the Turkish culture and in other cultures, who are out of the rational, who belong to her private space and who cannot be the subject.

It is possible to criticize the state of being unable to be the subject with regard to the feminist film theory in the representation of the female character in the narrative and also the fact that the spaces used in the narrative sustain male domination with regard to the concept of attributing gender to the space. While the film contributes the presentation of the problems of women in terms of the feminist film theory and practice, it cannot bring a radical and alternative view to the feminist film theory in the sense of the representation of the spaces in the narrative that are used in the representation of the

female character. A possible concrete contribution to the feminist film practice may be with the movies that produce radical discourses in the narratives in which stories of women are told. In this regard, the possibilities of women having hopes of salvation and surviving on their own should be presented to the audience in movies.

## VI. THE MOVIE 'MUSTANG' WITH THE NARRATIVE ANALYSIS METHOD WITHIN THE FRAME OF THE FEMINIST FILM THEORY

### A. *The Story of the Film*

The movie *Mustang* (2015) tells the restricted and governed lives of five young sisters. The five sisters, who live in a town on the coast of Black Sea, start to grow up under the protection of their uncle and paternal grandmother. As some of the sisters reach puberty and bloom, they are restrained from playing with their male friends and hanging out freely. The uncle character Erol is the male stereotype that the patriarchal order raised. Like the paternal grandmother, he is a character who restrains the young ladies from living their lives comfortably, who even gets angry when they laugh while eating and who presents the moral principles devoid of the concept of freedom. Not only are the girls' activities of hanging out and moving restricted but also their education is hindered, and they are directed only towards marriage, even before adolescence. The film narrative is told by the point of view of the youngest sibling, Lale. Despite the fact that Lale is the youngest of the sisters, she is presented as the character who questions everything the most, who struggles for her freedom and who tries to shape her life.

### B. *The Relationship of the Space with the Character and Story in Narrative Analysis*

*"Everything that can undermine the morale of ours is banned"* – Quotation from the movie, *Mustang*

While the inner spaces are presented as the house, hospital, and the car as part of the relationship of the space with the characters, the outer spaces are the road, seaside, graveyard and the street down which Nur and Lale walked at the end of the movie.

While the static spaces are presented as the house and the hospital as part of the relationship of the space with the story, the dynamic spaces are the road, seaside, graveyard and the street that Nur and Lale are walking down.

In the relationship of the space with the characters, the five sisters are presented mostly in the house from the beginning of the movie until the end. At the beginning of the movie, the girls go to the seaside to play in the sea with their male friends after school, and they are not seen in the public space in the long process of the narrative. The sisters' neighbors inform their paternal grandmother that they went to the seaside, and their life style is tried to be changed by their uncle and paternal grandmother after this incident. It is forbidden for the girls to set foot outside, and they are not allowed to join any kind of activity. On the way back from the football match that they went to see by escaping the house, more serious sanctions are placed on them. The voice of Lale who says "everything that can undermine the morale of ours is banned" with her

non-diegetic voice (off-voice) is presented together with the images in which the paternal grandmother is hiding the forbidden things. The computer, mobile phone, chewing gum, book about sexuality, cosmetics and things like these are hidden and taken away by the grandmother. The struggle of the girls to run away from home to go to a football match by using a hole under fence to run away from home reveals how even around their own house, which is included in the public space, they are restricted. In Lale's words, the house in which they live has been converted to "a madhouse" for a while. After this incident, Sonay and Selma, who are the two elder sisters, are forced into marriage, and thus, they are sent away from the house. The paternal grandmother considers marriage appropriate with regard to the girls' lives and for the "honor" of the family not to be the subject of gossip. The girls' education ends; the grandmother considers appropriate that only housework be taught to them and she also considers appropriate that the girls are ensured to internalize the works that belong to the private space of women.

When no blood is found on the bed sheets of Selma and her husband after their wedding night, the groom's family takes Selma to hospital to have her examined to see whether she is a virgin or not. The diagnosis that Selma receives reveals the fact that her hymen is not damaged. One of the most negative unwritten rules of the patriarchal order that victimizes women is the expectation of seeing the blood on Selma's bed sheets on the wedding night by the groom's family and the incrimination of the bride for the unseen blood. Defending the honor belongs to men in the social order; while men freely experience sexuality, getting married without experiencing sexuality is a rule that is attributed to women. Pierre Bourdieu stated that the fundamental of the protection of pride is the expectation of men having the expected potency, and it is the essence of the point of pride in the ethical dimension of manhood. He exemplified the damaging of the hymen for this situation [15]. While the bleeding of the virgin girl at the wedding night represents the honor of the woman, it also represents the power of the man.

After Selma and Sonay get married, the other sisters go to town only once with their uncle. The unmarried girls are the symbol of virginity, and their uncle does not want gossip about their honor to spread; so he protects them and keeps a close watch on them. The girls are told to wait for their uncle without getting out of the car, but they do not care and disobey this command and get out of the car; this treatment shows their psychology and also "the return of the suppressed". Moreover, Ece invited a young man to the car, made love with him and kept this secret from her uncle. The fact that Nur and Lale escape by car at the end of the movie is presented as the only area of freedom that the car can provide them. The vehicle in which they can experience their sexuality and they can escape the house is presented as the car. However, the lives of the girls inside the house and the representation of Selma at the hospital to which she goes through virginity control, reveal that they do not have area of freedom in spaces and presents the fact that they do not experience personal privacy even in their private spaces. The road is one of the outer spaces, it

provides that Lale learns how to drive, and it is also presented as an area where she practices going to other areas on the way to freedom. In the scene where the five sisters go to a football match, the road is shown as a space in which they exercise their freedom. The seaside where they joke with one another and with their male friends is presented as a short sequence of an outer space in which they can play games and laugh, and their state of being happy is ended with their punishment. Just like the punishment of the free female characters at the end of the movies with a classical narrative structure, the five sisters are punished by their families because they move freely against the nonverbal rules of the townsfolk. One of the sequences where the five sisters are seen in a public space is their presence at the funeral of Ece, who committed suicide. Nur and Lale walks on a street at the end of the movie, and that street offers an open-ended and promising end on the behalf of the feminist film practice. However, the guardianship of the two under-age sisters belong to their family, and therefore, the question 'how will the freedom that they are now trying to achieve be shaped after the end of the movie?' remains for the audience. In this sense, while it appears promising that the two sisters will achieve freedom through their own efforts, the question also remains 'how will they live after they leave their family?' The sisters take shelter at their teacher's house and want to live there, a circumstance which is not legal. However, their return to their family is in question as well. Details like "nothing bad happens to them during their trip and they easily find the address they are looking for" are thought-provoking with regard to the montage of the film narrative. The presentation of the house as the space at the focal center of the plotline in the relationship of the spaces with the characters offers the audience the type of relationship which is integrated with the private space that has been attributed to women for centuries. This period is the one in which maidens explore their sexuality in the process of proceeding from puberty to womanhood, and it is presented to the audience as the period in which young girls are seen as an object of desire. That is why the circumstance in which they are restricted to the private space is provided by their family. In this sense, as one of the inner spaces, the house is the space where the girls are frequently presented, and it also reveals the reasons of their restriction in this space. While the audience sees the reasons of the girls' imprisonment in the house and their experiences there, at the same time, they are exposed to the rules of the social order as well. This state provides the re-questioning of the codes of the social order.

Within the scope of the relationship of the space with the story, the static spaces are the house and the hospital, and they become the spaces of the restrictions of the characters. The static spaces allow the motions of the characters to a certain extent only; in the film, the girls have a certain range of motion in the house, but even their laughing, sitting and walking is restricted. The enforcements that they are exposed to during the period they live in the house, the fact that they cannot get out of the house and the fact that they are kept a close watch on and that at any moment the enclosing of the house like a prison are presented to the audience in such a way

that they remind of the Panopticon project. The incident where Selma is put through virginity control makes visible the fact that male dominance and violence against women are still seen in the present-day in some Turkish families. The gun of the groom's father is shown in close up, and it explicitly exhibits that the bride will be killed if she is not a virgin. In the film narrative, men lay claims to the honor of women; no enforcements exist regarding the sexuality of men, and the freedom of men is not something to be interfered in. Women's maintaining their lives as secondary humans is a fact that still exists at the present time, and it manifests in the representation of the sisters in the spaces presented in the film narrative. The dynamic spaces are the road on which Lale exercises her freedom, the road on which the sisters go to the match, the road on which Nur and her sister look for an address in Istanbul, the seaside on which they play games with their school friends; these are the spaces that promote their escape and provide the dynamism of their motions. The graveyard they go after the death of Ece is the space where they share sorrow, although it is a public space. Dynamic spaces are the spaces that they use either to move away from enforcements or to share their sorrow or to violate the bans. The house is presented as the space that falls within the focal center of the story because the events that take place in the house are in the focal center of the progress of the plotline, and in addition, the house comes into prominence with regard to feminist film theories in the discussion of the representations of the characters in the public space/private space differentiation. Since they are being observed in the house, they are harassed there, they violate the bans there, they learn the housework of the private space there, they witness the suicide of their sister there, their paternal grandmother commits violence there and they watch life behind bars or from the window there, the house is in the forefront as the inner space and the static space.

In the discourses used in the film, the fact that women live under male dominance is presented to the audience within the spaces. All the following incidents concretely present the dominance: the girls come home from the seaside after joking around with their male friends and their paternal grandmother verbalizes the claim of their neighbors "*they were masturbating on the nape of the necks of men*", when their uncle hears of the incident he gets angry and yells "*which one of you is prostituting herself?*", gratings are built and bricks are laid around the house, and later in the plotline the voice of Lale is heard to say "*the house has turned into a real prison*". Jeremy Bentham wrote letters regarding the Panopticon architectural project; in one of his letters he interpreted the essential points of the project plan, and he evaluated the advantages of the plan and thought that all the persons to be governed in the prison should respect the head keeper. With reference to Bentham's thoughts, it is possible to conclude that the paternal grandmother is a character who is also controlled by the uncle Erol. In this context, Erol is observed by the townsfolk and he includes the rules of the social order in the process that takes place in the house. A cinematic example of the Bentham's criticism is presented to the audience in the representation of women in the spaces where they are

restricted in the film narrative.

The sisters in the narrative are kept in the house and isolated from the world outside, and in a sense they maintain their lives like prisoners who are constantly observed. The examination of the movie in the context of feminist film theories and the expression of De Lauretis 'the camera catches the dominant ideology of the natural world' both reveal that the dominant ideology should be reconsidered. De Lauretis criticized the dominant ideology by also receiving support from the ideas of Johnston who contributed to the understanding of the importance of anti-cinema. According to Johnston, narrative is one of the main subjects of women's cinema. She indicated that the feminist strategy should combine the concepts of the movie as a political tool and the movie itself as entertainment. She also expressed that the analytical and political task of women's cinema 'includes the production marks of cinema' and 'marks are always a production' and the camera do not catch the reality but the dominant ideology of the 'natural' world [16]. In this regard, while the dominant ideology of the natural world is presented to the audience, the fact that 'this ideology can be reversed and it should be questioned' should also be given to the audience with cinematic codes.

After the presentation of the scene in which the uncle Erol abuses Nur, the grandmother understands what is going on, and while in the kitchen tells her son "you should end this", and by doing so, it is apparent that she is contented with this statement without any further intervention. This case exhibits the marks of the abuses of the uncle more than once and perhaps to the other girls as well. On the one hand, the fact that 'no responsibility is given to men when they make mistakes and the events are concealed' and the given codes of the social order are presented with the film narrative, while on the other hand, these existing codes are iterated. The girls are forced to maintain their lives in spaces similar to a prison and madhouse despite the fact that they make no mistakes, and live the lifestyle that the society considers appropriate.

While the fact that women directors present the audience, the rules that belong to the social order and male dominance can be described as constructive developments with regard to feminist film practice, promising discourses regarding women should also be created and presented in the plotlines and closings of movies and representations of women in movies. Mulvey mentioned an alternative audience formula, and expressed that this audience does not feed on voyeurism but feminism and is interested in new avant-garde cinema [17]. With reference to this interpretation of Mulvey, an audience is thought to exist who can discuss and question everything regarding womanhood, unlike the audience in classical narrative cinema where the watching experiences are based on voyeurism in their viewing processes. This film presents Mulvey's alternative model for the audiences of Mustang. This model can promote positive achievements in terms of the development of feminist cinema, changing the social order and attaching more value to women.



## VII. CONCLUSION

In this study, the representation of female characters in spaces is examined by using narrative analysis, and the representation of women regarding feminist film theory and practice is discussed in the analyzed films. The representation of female characters in such a way that they are inside the panopticon in the movies, Watchtower and Mustang, reveals the continuation of male dominance and the rules of the patriarchal order which still exist in the social order today. The reason for the choosing of these movies for the population of the study is the presentation of the female characters in them in such a way that they are imprisoned in the panopticon. In both movies, questions are produced that will make the audience think about the feminist film practice and the political and aesthetic representation of women. Women directors presenting stories of women from women's point of view is an important matter because the ones who will feel the emotions about womanhood and internalize them are women, and that is why women directors are chosen in the study. Apart from the difficulties women have in this world, the point of view of women directors in the narration of events like rape and birth are also important. The movies in which we see women characters who are imprisoned in their private spaces reveal that the patriarchal order still continues, however they also make the audience question 'what can be done for this order to change?' Considering that for centuries, men's freedom falls into the center of space policies, these policies have to be questioned as well. The fact that the public space belongs to men and concepts about private space are attributed to women, consider necessary that women are pressured even in private spaces. These questions should be considered from a sociological perspective: 'where is the space of women who are also pressured and harassed in their private spaces and who cannot conduct their personal daily lives in private spaces?' and 'why does the social order not liberate women in the spaces that belong to them?' The helplessness and subordination of Seher and her effort to survive in the film, the Watchtower, on the one hand, while on the other the shaping of her life by a male rescuer as in classical narrative cinema and in the film closing, presented this way all denote a debatable condition with regard to the feminist film practice, because the film was made in such a way that it includes the cinematographic features of the contemporary narrative structure and therefore a more promising closing – in the sense of the feminist film practice – for the movie Watchtower could be thought. That is why the author of this paper claims that Seher is represented in the film as a "sub(object)ivated" character. "Sub(object)ivated" characters are individuals in movies who have been turned into objects by the rules of the social order while they are in a struggle for being the subject [18]. In Mustang, on the other hand, the facts that the lives of the sisters are maintained in a house like a prison and the youngest sister challenging this life are promising in terms of feminist film characters. Although the closing of the film exhibits the freedom of Lale, she is a character younger than 18 years old and her guardianship belongs to her family, and this will raise questions as to the hope of the audience

regarding her freedom. The feminist film presents stories of women, pains of women and everything about their existence, however films containing promising closings and radical discourses should be considered by directors for the benefit of the development of the feminist film. Radical closings, reversing plotlines, films presenting the shortcomings or bias of the rules of the social order and the cinematographic contents that make the audience feel the emotions of women directors about womanhood can create more fields for discussion in terms of feminist film production.

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