Light from above

A study of the role of the mise-en-scène in the creation of sublimity in cinematic woman portrayals

A Master's Thesis for the Degree Master of Arts (Two Years) in Visual

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Abstract

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A study of the role of the mise-en-scène in the creation of sublimity in cinematic woman portrayals

This Master's Thesis explores mise-en-scène as a tool for the creation of sublime experience within the context of cinematic portrayals of female characters. Focus is set on introducing the concepts of the sublime and mise-en-scène and on illustrating, using films, how the mentioned concepts interplay in the creation of female portrayals. The theoretical aspects of the sublime are mostly adopted from I. Kant and J. F. Lyotard. Sublime woman portrayals are illustrated using three examples: *Summer with Monika* (Ingmar Bergman, 1953), *Mother India* (Mehboob Khan, 1957), and Gravity (Alfonso Cuarón). The empirical analysis comprises four films: *Shanghai Express* (Josef von Sternberg, 1932), *Scarlett Empress* (Josef von Sternberg, 1934), *Holy Motors* (Leos Carax 2012) and *The House* (Sharunas Bartas, 1997). I have been able to identify an intention of the artists to use the mise-en-scène for creating a visual, potential energy, originating from the contrast between the feminine beauty and lightness of the characters and something dark and implicitly masculine of the same, which may serve as a bridge to sublime experiences of the spectator. In surrealistic atmosphere woman portrayals get a phantasmagorical light, which creates the feeling of affect, grandest, even monstrosity. Interestingly, I proved that the scary/ugly, the contrary to beautiful mise-en-scène, can shed sublime light on a woman portrayals. Besides cinematographic applications, our findings could, through similar techniques, be applied also within the field of advertisement.

Key words: sublime, woman portrayal, mise-en-scène, atmosphere, lighting.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Problem diagnosis/Background

This thesis investigates the analysis of the Sublime in theory and practice. More specifically, focus is set on the investigation of *mise-en-scène*, i.e. techniques used by a director to set the atmosphere of his film. Usually mise-en-scène comprises: composition, sets, actors, costumes, lighting, sound, etc. This Master's Thesis explores mise-en-scène as a tool for the creation of sublime experience within the context of *portrayals of female characters.*

The literature (e.g. Longinus, Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, Jean-Francois Lyotard) provides several interpretations of the sublime. Important, that the sublime and beautiful viewed as different concepts, for instance Philip Shaw in *The Sublime (The New Critical Idiom)* by analysing classical philosophers of sublime summarizes distinction between the sublime and beautiful that has become standard:

The sublime is greater than the beautiful; the sublime is dark, profound, and overwhelming and implicitly masculine, whereas the beautiful is light, fleeting, and charming and implicitly feminine. Where the sublime is a divisive force, encouraging feelings of differences and difference, the beautiful encourages a spirit of unity and harmony.[1]

Generally the sublime is associated with aesthetics, as the quality of greatness beyond of usual measurements or imitations.

Some initial investigations indicate that mise-en-scène indeed provides some tools for creating sublime feelings of female elevation. In addition, I have been able to identify an intention of the artists to use the mise-en-scène for creating a visual, potential energy, originating from the contrast between the feminine beauty and lightness of the characters and something dark and implicitly masculine of the same, which may serve as a bridge to sublime experiences of the spectator. However, here more research is needed in order to gain a better understanding.

In cinema there is still a lack of knowledge when it concerns sublimity in connections to the female portrayal. Therefore, an important task for me as a visual

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[1] P. Shaw, *The Sublime (The New Critical Idiom)*, Routledge, London and New York, 2006. p. 9.

culture specialist is to explain the concept of the sublime and mise-en-scène to provide the most powerful tactical means of portrayal building in cinema. The chosen films contain several examples of iconic female, portrayals and the thesis aims at exploring how the director operates with mise-en-scène in order to assign these portrayals a sense of female elevation. In this master thesis I will try to explore and analyse the fundamental elements of the mise-en-scène in cinematic iconography. In order to illustrate the sublime woman portrayals some later examples such as, *Summer with Monika* (Ingmar Bergman, 1953), *Mother India* (Mehboob Khan, 1957), Gravity (Alfonso Cuarón) will be used. However, the empirical analysis of sublime woman portrayals comprises four films: *Shanghai Express* (Josef von Sternberg, 1932), *Scarlett Empress* (Josef von Sternberg, 1934), *Holy Motors* (Leos Carax 2012) and *The House* (Sharunas Bartas, 1997). Moreover, the chosen films illustrate how mise-en-scène can create a hyper-real, phantasmagorical atmosphere, which affects woman portrayals and gives an experience of the sublime.

In order to get better understanding it is important to look back to analyse the influential portrayals of women. In the history of cinema, the von Stenberg and Dietrich tandem is a parade example on how mise-en-scène can be used for creating sublime woman portrayals (see e.g. Gerd Gemunden and Mary R. Desjardins[2]). The collaboration between von Stenberg and Dietrich lasted seven films. Josef von Stenberg featured Marlene Dietrich in, among others, *Shanghai Express* and *Scarlett Empress*. As these films are rich of visual *mise-en-scènic* elements creating an almost transcendental atmosphere and sublimity of woman portrayals, they will both be analysed in the present thesis.

The works by Leos Carax and Sharunas Bartas contain several of examples of iconic female portrayals, which is important when exploring how the director operates with mise-en-scène in order to assign these portrayals a sense of female elevation. Despite being from different countries and having quite different filmographies, the French director L. Carax and the Lithuanian director S. Bartas are placed in the same empirical analysis. However, when watching the two mentioned works, I sensed something essentially similar for both, a similar poetical style characterized by surrealism, madness, nostalgia, melancholia, etc. The connection between the two directors is hard to dress in words, but comes from the way they shed light on woman portrayals and create a special atmosphere in their films. Based

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[2] G. Gemunden and M. R. Desjardins, *Dietrich Icon*, Duke University Press, USA, 2007.

on the mise-en-scène technique I will try to recognise some essential elements, common for the two directors, behind the camera that create surrealistic atmosphere.

1.2. Relevance of the work

The problem of the sublime in cinema comprises not only aspects such as how to represent the sublime, which according to some theorists is labelled as "indescribable", or that the sublime has a tendency to exceed the concept of the beautiful, but more important to gain *meaning* in the postmodern visual culture. According to J. Baudrillard: 'we live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning'.[3] Therefore, one of the aims of the thesis is to analyse how the sublime can be used for gaining *meaning*.

In postmodern culture, the aesthetics of the sublime gets a sort of *hyper-meaning* in a world where meaning is simulated, just like the reality itself is, according to Baudrillard, obtained through 'the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyper real'.[4] A picture of meaning that was never offered by the real world, a meaning more meaningful that any real meaning, just like the hyper real makes the spectator 'see what the real never was (but 'as if you were there'), without the distance that gives us perspectival space and depth vision (but 'more real than nature')'.[5]

Initial studies indicate that the project requires, in order to gain clarity and orientation, the sub-object to separate the concepts of beauty and the sublime. This will lead to a split of the field of visual culture: On one side, we find *consumerism*, which closely related to the concept of *beauty*, manifested in terms light, fleeting, and charming etc.; on the other side, the aesthetics beyond beauty: the sublime. In consumerism culture the sublime is important because it gives the aesthetical pleasure for the spectator. Sublime female representation could be understood as *muse* - the sublime portrayals in visual culture could function as an inspiration to see a film, to buy a product, but also morals and ideals. The 'presentation' of the sublime woman portrayal in cinema could be understood as mise-en-scène, due to its representational potential. A sublime woman portrayal

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[3] J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans., S.F. Glaser, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1994, p. 52.
[4] Ibd., p. 3.
[5] Ibd., pp. 20-21.

contains some I would call heroic-iconic elements (cf. Section 2.1.1) Needless to say, successful portrayals of a woman could be helpful for creating a powerful image of the goods or for increasing the sales. Often, a woman's body/face is used as a tool to gain trust in companies' conception, ideas, slogans, etc.

In the present thesis, mise-en-scène could be correlated also within the field of advertisement by means of standard cinematic techniques and can be viewed as a toolbox of techniques for creating atmosphere; on the contrary, mise-en-scène is usually paid less attention when it comes to advertisement and photography. Interestingly, the role of mise-en-scène in advertisement and photo has not been studied to the same extent as in cinematography. Through a theoretical odyssey of the sublime and mise-en-scène in the cinematic portrayals, the project aims at reaching a better understanding of the role of the sublime in the advertisement.

This project would be useful for a visual culture academics and practitioners, as well as actors, casting experts, directors, producers, advertisement, public relation, marketing specialist, painters, photographers, etc.

1.3. Research question, research goals, and hypothesis

The main research question is focused on the mise-en-scène as an important tool for the creation of sublime experience and atmosphere within the context of women's portrayals, and will thus be analysed within the field of film. Thus it is important to introduce the concepts of the sublime and mise-en-scène and to illustrate, using films, how the mentioned concepts interplay in the creation of female portrayals.

When explaining the sublime as an essential feature of the aesthetic experience in visual culture, more specifically in portrayals of women, it is useful to perform the analysis pursuant to the following four sub-objectives, namely:
- to analyse the nature of the sublime and to survey the literature on the sublime in order to formulate a definition of the concept that is applicable to the research question; this will also involve the study of certain portrayals of woman in film through the historical and philosophical contexts;
- to distinguish the concept of the sublime from the concept of beauty;

- to explain mise-en-scène as a cinematic technique and to clarify how it is used in cinema in order to create sublime experience in a portrayal and to let the results serve as a basis for an empirical analysis of portrayals within the framework of films.

The project works under the following three hypotheses:

1. The sublime portrayal expresses in it self inner greatness and makes the spectator get a sense of smallness.

2. Sublime is the convergence of the feminine and masculine gender.

3. The beautiful portrayal of a woman becomes sublime in the contrastive (not beautiful) mise-en-scène.

(The first hypothesis is adopted from Kant (*Critique of the Power of Judgment*) and the second from Lyotard (*Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*) see the theoretical part, Section: *The conception of the sublime*, for details. The third has, as far as known to the author of this thesis, some novelty, but could be connected to the Kantian idea of the pepper (see the beginning of Section 2. for details).

1.4. Theories and methods

The theoretical aspects of the sublime mostly will be adopted from I. Kant and J. F. Lyotard. With the theory as a starting-point, the analysis will be based on reductions and recognition of similarities scenes from a number of films. When starting an analysis of the sublime along the mise-en-scène path, the process of cognition, the way of *observing* is essential, as a combination of methodological practices, such as the phenomenological and hermeneutical approaches, will be used. In order to interpret newly the existing theories of the sublime and mise-en-scène, scientific research methods with collected and analysed empirical data will be used as quantative approach.

The present thesis will use semiotic analysis, i.e. focus will be set on signs and sign processes, indication, designation, metaphor, symbolism, etc. Semiotic analysis is essential in order to gain more meaning through signs, and is thus highly useful for the task of gaining more meaning via the sublime.

With the theoretical points of the sublime and mise-en-scène the analysis will be based on the philosophical analysis in cinema as a qualitative

approach to recognise the essential ingredients (e.g. the gaze, framing, lighting) of the sublime and mise-en-scène in practice signs of sublimity from a number of woman portrayals in cinema. In order to gain a better understanding of the sublime in portrayals, biographical documentaries will be analysed.

Moreover, in my opinion, in order to create a sublime woman portrayal the methods of representation should be extended beyond general understanding about the concept of sublime or cinematic techniques such as mise-en-scène, which mentioned concepts and theoretical approaches cannot convey.

1.5. Current research and sources

The concept of the sublime has been analysed by writers such as the Greek critic Dionysius Longinus, Thomas Burnet (1635–1715), Edmund Burke (1729–97), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998), Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), Slavoj Žižek (1949-), etc. The theoretical developments of the thesis will be mostly based on I. Kant's theory on the sublime, due to his aesthetical approach to the sublime in his theoretical work *Critique of The Power of Judgement.*

Moreover, the sublime in the context of cinema was analysed by Todd A. Comer and Lioyd Isaac Vayo (*Terror and the cinematic sublime,* 2013) who made a connection between the sublime and politics. This anthology lacks the female perspective, but provides some ideas to be developed. From the female perspective about sublime wrote Barbara Claire Freeman (*The Feminine Sublime* (1997)), where she reconsiders previous mentioned authors (Longinus, Burke, Kant, Derrida, etc.) and including analysis of women's novels. Philip Shaw made a historical overview of previous studies of the sublime in *The Sublime (The New Critical Idiom).*

The role of mise-en-scène in cinematography is analysed broadly: D. Bordwell and K. Thompson[6]; M. Praggiore and T. Wallis[7], W. J. Hill and P. C. Gibson[8], E. Sikov[9], etc. Also theories treating more specific topics will be adopted

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[6] D. Bordwell and K. Thompson, *Film art an introduction*, 8th edn., University of Wisconsin, 2008.
[7] M. Pramaggiore and T. Wallis, *Film: A Critical Introduction*, London, Laurence King Publishing, 2005.
[8] W. J. Hill and P. C. Gibson, *The Oxford guide to film studies*, Oxford University Press, USA, 1998.
[9] E. Sikov, *Film Studies: An Introduction*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2010.

here, such as the framing theory of G. Deleuze[10] and lighting theory as treated in J. Altons work *Painting with Light*[11], etc.

The analysis comprises four films (visual material):

- *Scarlet Empress* and *Shanghai Express* (Josef von Sternberg, 1932 and 1934);
- *Holy Motors* (Leos Carax, 2012);
- *The House* (Sharunas Bartas, 1997).

1.6. Structure of the work

In thesis will be analysed the presence of the sublime in portrayals of woman. The thesis comprises the following stages. First I will introduce the field of my subject: the role of mise-en-scène in the creation of sublimity in (cinematic) woman portrayals. Second, I will shed more light on the concept of the sublime by using different theoretical approaches. Moreover, I will analyse the sublime in opposition to beautiful and in the connection to the gender and hypperreality. Then, using mise-en-scène as a tool, I will analyse the sublime woman portrayals in cinema. The analysis will comprise the understanding of woman portrayals through some mise-scène elements, such as framing, close-up, gaze, sets and props. However, special importance it will be given to lighting, in order to introduce some importance concepts used in the next section, in which the first part is dedicated to an empirical analysis of the works of Josef von Sternberg, who was the genius of mise-en-scène and especially of lighting (see i.e. Marlene Dietrich portrayal Fig. 5). The second part is devoted to an empirical analysis of L. Carax's *Holy Motors* and S. Bartas's *The House*, where the directors create, by adapting conveniently the mise-en-scène, a phantasmagorical atmosphere, which shed a sublime light on woman portrayals. Finally, in the last sections, I will provide some conclusions, a bibliography as well as a list of images and videos.

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[10] G. Deleuze, *Cinema 1 The Movement-Image*, trans., H Tomlinson and B Habberjam, USA: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.
[11] J. Alton, *Painting with Light*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1995, p. 18.

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUBLIME

Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis. [12]

From a first glance it might look like the concept of the sublime has lost actuality in visual culture today. It is however important to identify the sublime, as this the meaning of this concept changes in time and space. In postmodern world the sublime is orientated towards social engagement or radical problems rather aesthetical experience. It is important to understand the sublime not only through the theoretical path, but also independently of the theoretical space. Naturally, the question arises whether the sublime has it its own law, independently of mise-en-scène, psychoanalytic processes, history, etc.? What role does the spectator's subjectivity play? Or to what *degree* is the sublime connected to symbols and universal values? For one spectator, L. da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* may give rise to a feeling of aversion, while other observers may describe their feelings of the work in terms of elevation and sublimity. However, before starting up an analysis of the sublime it is important to define accurately the concept in question and to understand why it matters in the field of visual culture or, more specifically, in cinema.

Generally, the sublime depicts a special feeling of the spectator, which comes from seeing something stunning, great. In the dictionary, sublime is defined as: 'elevated or lofty in thought, language, etc. Impressing the mind with a sense of grandeur or power; inspiring awe, veneration, etc.'[13] Moreover, in my opinion, the sublime may give rise to mixed feelings and could be illustrated with the concept of oxymoron, such as happily melancholic, monstrously beautiful, powerfully fragile, etc.

Sometimes the sublime is related to the concept of beauty, but there is a slight division between these two. Moreover it has been discussed what the gender of the sublime is: feminine or masculine. Some writers claim that is it masculine, others feminine, but the thesis will explore both genders as complementary for each other.

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[12] 'Times change and we change with them', (trans., from latin, J. Owen), in the T. Janson, *A Natural History of Latin: The story of the world's most succsessful language*, trans. M. Damsgård Sorensen and N. Vincent, UK, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 293.
[13] Sublime, see: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/sublime?s=t>. (accessed 13 October 2013).

Nevertheless, in order to create art that causes sublime feelings of the spectator, the author should be very talented and reach a certain geniality.

One of the purposes of this chapter is to shed more light on the theoretical conception of the sublime as well as the artistic potential power to create visual art that gives rise to sublime feelings. Here the capacity of the spectator to grasp and process the message of the artist plays a crucial role. According to M. Liljefors: 'such a message signals that there is some meaning in it that is not being transmitted, that some secret is withheld from communication, and message therefore comes through to the recipient as a mysterious enigma that demands to be deciphered'.[14] The process of observing involves a spectrum of mental and biological aspects, such as the depth of perception, intelligence, etc.

2.1. The conception of the sublime

The nature of the sublime is complicated to explain. The meaning of the sublime has developed in time and as been influenced by different time periods (Renaissance, Enlightenment, Modernism, Postmodernism, etc.) Different authors interpret differently the concept of the sublime. There are also substantial differences views associated with different isms, such as romanticism or postmodernism. If the romantics were trying to 'incorporate the sense of sublime'[15], the postmodernists as Lyotard think that sublime should sustain a sense of shock "postmodernism, by way of contrast, seeks to retain a sense of the sublime as other, a "something" that can never be "interfused" through the use of metaphors, symbols, or verbal connectives.'[16] Nature is one of the best examples, which could provide sublime feelings. For the romantics nature was the opening gates to the sublime. For instance, the spectator sees the mountains, but cannot take the whole scenery into his perception. According to Barbara Claire Freeman: "the affect of sublime language entails a certain loss of control."[17] The spectacular scenery of nature creates an existentialistic danger and gives a thrill.

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[14] M. Liljefors, 'Bodies Against Meaning: De-Subjectification in Body Art and Bioart', in *The Body as Gift, Resource and Commodity. Exchanging Organs, Tissues, and Cells in the 21st Century,* eds. M. Gunnarsson and F. Sveneaeus, Södertörn Studies in Practical Knowledge 6, 2012, p. 174.

[15] P. Shaw, *The Sublime (The New Critical Idiom)*, Routledge, London and New York, 2006. p. 9.

[16] Ibd., p. 9.

[17] B. C. Freeman *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in women's fiction*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1995, p. 17.

The experience of the sublime is closely related to the presence of an *image* and the process of *visualizing*. Even when poetry is read, the intellectual perception relies on mental images to understand the metaphors of the text. According to the poetry critic J. F. Nims, 'only sensual images are the basic of sublime.[18] It could be that the sublime portrayals are not only a sentimental way of approaching the reality, but an existential experience of the body/spirit in time and space. In addition, sublimity is closely related to a form of self-understanding and "common sense" experience, which makes it possible connect the process of visualizing the sublime to rational disciplines, such as philosophy or natural science. According to the one of the pioneer sublime analyser Longinus: 'sublime, whatever it occurs consist in a certain loftiness and excellence of language'.[19] Various categories of the sublime have been studied frequently within the fields of philosophy, aesthetics etc.

The discourse of the sublime is bound of many components. According to B.C. Freeman, who focused on Longinus understanding of the sublime: 'the effect of sublime language entails a certain loss of control'.[20] Interestingly, B. C. Freeman writes that for Longinus, 'the sublime provides ecstasy rather than persuasion in hearer.'[21] The author mentions that persuasion is something what we can control; this is why it cannot be related to the conception of the sublime, as the sublime goes together with a feeling of wonder and astonishment. Therefore, one may ask naturally: is the meaning of the sublime in cinema to give a certain pleasure, or, for the sublime woman portrayal, to give an aesthetical excitement to the spectator, or is there something more?

Generally, in the classical tradition of the sublime, the latter is associated with aesthetics, as the quality of greatness beyond of usual measurements or imitations. I. Kant claims that:

The *aesthetic* estimation of magnitude in which is felt the effort at comprehension which exceeds the capacity of the imagination to comprehend the progressive apprehension in one whole of intuition, and in which is at the same time perceived the inadequacy of this faculty, which is unbounded in its progression, for grasping a basic measure that is suitable for the estimation of magnitude with the least effort of the understanding and for using it for the

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[18] J. F. Nims, *Western Wind: An Introduction to Poetry,* USA, McGraw-Hill, 1992, p. 5.
[19] *Longinus on The Sublime*, trans., HL Havel, intr., A. Lang, London, Macmillan and co., 1890, p. 2.
[20] B. C. Freeman, *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in women's fiction*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1995, p. 17.
[21] Ibd., 17.

estimation of magnitude.[22]

On the other hand, A. Jones writes that the theories of I. Kant were, in art critics, progressively oversimplified into models of aesthetic judgment. Moreover A. Jones thinks that 'stripped of the ambiguities and complexities of Kant's model, "disinterestedness" in modernist art discourse was mobilized to ensure the possibility often objective-disembodied, logical, "correct" evaluation of the aesthetic value and meaning of artworks'.[23]

After having analysed the sublime in the works of a large set of philosophers works, P. Shaw points out that: 'the sublime, somewhat ironically, given its overtly metaphysical ambitions, turns out to be a form of materialism after all'.[24] Hegel emphasizes the presence of *drama* to the experience of the sublime, which in his eyes "is the counsel of the goddess".[25] Similarly, Kant claims: 'that is sublime which even to be able to think of demonstrates a faculty of the mind that surpasses every measure of the senses'.[26] The understanding of portrayals as a work of visual art comes more or less from the *sensuous* (see e.g. Kant[27]) sphere, due to the subjective affection plays the central role.

Fine art is meant to arouse feelings, usually the feeling of pleasure, such as joy or hope. Interestingly, Kant the feeling of pleasure related to the *transcendental* sphere: '[…] without regard to the distinction whether it accompanies sensation, reflection or the determination of the will, must be transcendental'[28]. Moreover, Kant places the feeling of pleasure beside that of displeasure, as 'they are not kinds of cognition, cannot be explained by themselves at all, and are felt, not understood; hence they can be only inadequately explained through the influence that a

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[22] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Berlin and Libau, Lagarde und Friederich, 1790, eng. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. P. Guyer, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 139.

[23] A. Jones, "Body", in *Critical Terms for Art History,* ed. RS Nelson & R Shiff, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 253.

[24] P. Shaw, *The Sublime (The New Critical Idiom)*, Routledge, London and New York, 2006. p. 10.

[25] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, 'Aesthetics', *Lectures on Fine Art*, trans., T. M. Knox, vol. I, Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 230.

[26] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Berlin and Libau, Lagarde und Friederich, 1790, eng. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. P. Guyer, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 134.

[27] 'The agreeable is that which pleases the senses in sensation. Now here there is an immediate opportunity to reprove and draw attention to a quite common confusion of the double meaning that the word ''sensation'' can have. All satisfaction (it is said or thought) is itself sensation (of a pleasure). Hence everything that pleases, just because it pleases, is agreeable (and, according to its different degrees or relations to other agreeable sensations, graceful, lovely, enchanting, enjoyable, etc.).' Ibd., p. 91.

[28] Ibd., p. 32.

representation has on the activity of the powers of the mind by means of this feeling'.[29] The sublime can be also associated with the feeling of fear, justice, or even religious feelings. According to Hegel, 'feeling remains a purely subjective emotional state of mind in which the concrete thing vanishes, contracted into a circle of the greatest abstraction'.[30]

In cinema, the sublime produces identification between spectators and actors. The sublime feeling creates a power where one is bigger and another smaller. Actors must show their greatness on order to expose themselves in a sublime manner. Moreover, the sublime portrayal of a woman in visual culture could be a powerful way of imagining and representing selfhood. For instance, L. H. Rugg proposes, in the article 'self-projection and still photography in the work of Ingmar Bergman', that 'Bergman deploys representational media and strategies to interrogate commonly and traditionally held notions about what comprises a self'.[31] The author also links neuro-philosophical understanding of selfhood to photography: 'recent interdisciplinary studies linking philosophy and neuroscience have suggested that the 'self' is itself a representational phenomenon'.[32] In the modern time attention is paid to the analysis of the self. According to N. Rose, human beings in the advanced industrial and liberal democratic societies have come to understand themselves as inhabited by a deep interior psychological space: 'people who increasingly come to understand ourselves, speak about ourselves, and act upon ourselves and others as beings shaped by our biology'.[33] N. Rose also suggests that we have become neurochemical selves: 'While our desires, moods, and discontents might previously have been mapped onto a psychological space, they are now mapped upon the body itself, or one particular organ of the body-the brain. And this brain is itself understood in a particular register'.[34] It is easier to *feel* the term "sublime" rather than describing it technically. In Kantian words, the sublime is infinite greatness, greatness of the mind in the present trying to imagine what it

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[29] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Berlin and Libau, Lagarde und Friederich, 1790, eng. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. P. Guyer, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 32.

[30] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics, Lectures on Fine Art*, trans., T. M Knox, vol. I, Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 33

[31] L. Haverty-Rugg, 'Self-Projection and Still Photography in the Work of Ingmar Bergman', in *Ingmar Bergman Revisited: Performance, Cinema and the Arts, ed.* M Koskinen, London and New York, Wallflower Press, 2008p. 107.

[32] Ibd., p. 108.

[33] N. Rose, 'Neurochemical Selves', *The Politics of Life Itself,* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2007, p. 188.

[34] Ibd., 188.

cannot; however, the failure of the attempt to achieve greatness gives a painful pleasure.

2.1.1. The division between the beauty and sublime

In visual culture the aspects of beauty is a significant matter. Artists are searching for novel forms of beauty and are trying to reflect the same in art. In mass media the concept of beauty has become almost universal, although the sublime is still rare. As I mentioned in the previous paragraph, this is due to one factor of subjectivity and another of capacity, i.e. the capacity of being able to create a portrayal that could arose the sublime feelings. At a first glance, sublimity can be incorporated with the beauty as a result of misunderstanding of the differences between these two concepts. Since Burke, the term of the beautiful was set against the sublime and not only in the theoretical context. Furthermore, in his work *Critique of The Power of Judgement*, I. Kant made a division between the beautiful and the sublime and analysed separately these two aspects. According to Kant: 'the beautiful in nature concerns the form of the object, which consists in limitation; the sublime, by contrast, is to be found in a formless object insofar as limitlessness is represented in it, or at its instance, and yet it is also thought as a totality.'[35] In the Kantian view the sublime is stronger and bigger than the beautiful.

The sublime and the beautiful do not have a close relation. According to Lyotard: 'Kant is well aware that the cousinship between the good and the sublime is closer than that between the beautiful and the sublime.'[36] Moreover Burke noted that:

The sublime 'dwells on large objects, and terrible' and is linked to the intense sensations of terror, pain, and awe, the focus of the beautiful, by contrast, is on 'small ones, and pleasing' and appeals mainly to the domestic affections, to love, tenderness, and pity. Crucially, with the sublime 'we submit to what we admire', whereas with the beautiful 'we love what submits to us'.[37]

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[35] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Berlin and Libau, Lagarde und Friederich, 1790, eng. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. P. Guyer, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 128.

[36] J. F. Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, trans. E. Rottenberg, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1991, p. 181.

[37] E. Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry, in P Shaw, *The Sublime (The New Critical Idiom)*, London and New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 57.

The beautiful and the sublime can be divided by scale. In the Kantian view, the concept of the beautiful is connected with the representation of *quality*, while the concept of the sublime with the representation of *quantity*. Division between sublime and beautiful could be made involving math, in such a way that spectator finds himself unable to understand object as a whole, more specifically he cannot calculate the larger object and feels infinite. However, Kant therefore claims that: 'nature contains nothing that would be monstrous (or magnificent or terrible); the magnitude that is apprehended may grow as large as one wants as long as it can be comprehended in one whole by the imagination.'[38] The sublime could represent something *colossal*[39] (like the Egyptian pyramids appear colossal to the observer) and even monstrous.

By taking a Kantian quality and quantity viewpoint on the sublime one could verify the hypothesis that the sublime in itself expresses inner greatness and makes the spectator get a sense of smallness. The spectator understands that there is something inexpressibly great, which slowly flourishes in his eyes, but stays uncanny: 'the sublime is irony at its purest and most effective: a promise of transcendence leading to the edge of an abyss'.[40] According to Kant sublime is a provocation of the mind and sustains a sense of shock; it has the meaning of that which exceeds the norm. Moreover, after having elaborated with ideas describing the sublime using mathematics, Kant comes to the insight that quantifying the sublime using mathematical tools has another side of the coin - dynamics. Kant considers *intensity* and *presence* (in time and space) to be important components of the sublime. Moreover, he emphasises that if the spectator is in danger, the feeling of anxiety is different from the feeling of the sublime, as the sublime is in larger extent an aesthetic experience, rather than a practical feeling of personal danger. According to Lyotard: 'beauty is not the fruit of contrast, rather, it is the flower of love.'[41] Modernism and postmodernism provide different interpretations of the sublime. In the Lyotardian view, the sublime should not be confused with 'plenitudinous visual

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[38] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Berlin and Libau, Lagarde und Friederich, 1790, eng. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. P. Guyer, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 136.

[39] 'An object is monstrous if by its magnitude it annihilates the end, which its concept constitutes. The mere presentation of a concept, however, which is almost too great for all presentation (which borders on the relatively monstrous) is called colossal, because the end of the presentation of a concept is made more difficult if the intuition of the object is almost too great for our faculty of apprehension'. (Ibd., 136).

[40] P. Shaw, *The Sublime, (The New Critical Idiom)*, London and New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 10.

[41] J. F. Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, trans. E Rottenberg, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1991, p. 180.

presence'.[42] Lyotard provided a distinction between modernism and postmodernism with respect to the aesthetics of the sublime. Speaking about the visual art in the aesthetical space, Cassirer mentions the importance of reflection and artistic perception: 'We find ourselves suddenly transplanted into a new sphere, the sphere of pure representation *(Darstellung)*. All genuine representation is by no means a merely passive copying of the world; it is a new relationship in which man places himself to the world'.[43] When analysing sublime the process of aesthetics is an important issue. R. Knodt (1994) introduced the concept of the *atmospheric projection[44],* which was analysed in the H.K. Nielsen article: '*Totalizing Aesthetics? Aesthetic Theory and the Aesthetization of Everyday Life*'. According to R. Knodt, atmospheric projection 'conceptualizes the emergence of the quality of experience, the "atmosphere", of our experiential exchange with everyday contexts and spaces as a projecting dialogue'[45]. The author also shed more light on the extended process of aesthetic experience of things and circumstances in our everyday life.[46] Moreover, R. Knodt points out that things and objects in general bear witness of their history, of their process of manufacture and the qualitative differences between the responses which different spaces and aesthetic contexts of everyday life offer to our projections of meaning.

Interestingly, the sublime, in the contrast to beauty, does not mean happiness, rather melancholy. Panofsky mentions that melancholy places the "creative mind" on a dizzy height where he performs at his maximum in solitude. Moreover, the author uses the Platonic term "divine madness" to illustrate the superiority of such an artists, and emphasises the Aristotelian treatise: 'sublime and terrifying thing which elevates the genius beyond all ordinary mortals, but also threatens him with tragedies unknown to them: melancholy'.[47] In Kantian view observer approaches the artwork

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[42]M. Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-century French Thought*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993, p. 582.

[43] E. Cassirer, 'Myth, aesthetic and theoretical space', trans. DP Verene and LH Foster, *Man and World* 2, 3-17, 1969, p. 12.

[44] H. K. Nielsen, 'Totalizing Aesthetics? Aesthetic Theory and the Aesthetization of Everyday Life', *Nordisk Estetisk Tidskrift*, 2005, p. 73.

[45] Ibd., p. 73.

[46] The process thereby de differentiates to a certain extent the modern formation of society, but along with the aestheticization of practically everything, the art world and the cultural sector still exist as differentiated spheres for aesthetic practice in a classic sense. So rather than the divisions into spheres being totally eradicated, we see the coexistence – and continuous mutual influence – between a relatively well-defined aesthetic practice with artefacts constructed'. Ibd., p. 64.

[47] E. Panofsky, 'Artist, Scientist, Genius: Notes on the 'Renaissance-Dämmerung'', in *The Renaissance: Six Essays, ed.* W Ferguson, New York and Evanston, Harper Torchbook, 1962, p.173.

in a spontaneous way instead of a confirming.[48] Geniality goes in parallel with the imagination and the world of ideas. The sublime feeling can encourage the artist 'to believe that we can scale the highest mountain'.[49] In order to create art that gives rise to sublime feelings, the artist has to master his handcraft on the level of a genius, or, according to E. Panofsky: 'a man so gifted is indeed no longer human but 'divine'''.[50]

The opposite side of the sublime is horror. In the analysis of S. Freud's concept of the *Uncanny* (*unheimlich*[51]), the sublime is mentioned in the horror context as an opposite feeling with the circumstances and the objects that call forth: "on aesthetics, which in general prefer to concern themselves with what is beautiful, attractive and sublime, that is with feelings of a positive nature".[52] According to L. Badley, 'Sigmund Freud defined horror in terms of the irrational, "gut level" fear, the uncanny *(unheimlich),* inspired by certain images and experiences in which the subject recognizes a repressed memory from childhood or an undiscovered aspect of the self'.[53] L. Badley thinks that the Freudian model continues to provide the commonly assumed concepts of the self: 'it is a functioning vocabulary of the self that includes the *ego* (and *alter ego), repression,* with its presumption of a hidden or unconscious self, and *sublimation*'.[54] Moreover, L. Badley expresses scepticism concerning Freudian theory 'social historians, including Freud's biographer Peter Gay, agree that Freudian psychology is not a science, but a belief system a philosophy or religion'.[55] However, in order to gain more understanding of the sublime, it is valuable to investigate the opposite side of the concept, such as horror.

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[48] 'To grasp a regular, purposive structure with one's faculty of cognition (whether the manner of representation be distinct or confused) is something entirely different from being conscious of this representation with the sensation of satisfaction. Here the representation is related entirely to the subject, indeed to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, which grounds an entirely special faculty for discriminating and judging that contributes nothing to cognition but only holds the given representation in the subject up to the entire faculty of representation, of which the mind becomes conscious in the feeling of its state'. (Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Berlin and Libau, Lagarde und Friederich, 1790, eng. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. P. Guyer, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 89-90).
[49] P. Shaw, *The Sublime, (The New Critical Idiom)*, London and New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 10.
[50] E. Panofsky, 'Artist, Scientist, Genius: Notes on the 'Renaissance-Dämmerung'', in *The Renaissance: Six Essays, ed.* W Ferguson, New York and Evanston, Harper Torchbook, 1962, p.172.
[51] The German word *unheimlich* is obviously the opposite of *heimlich, heimisch,* meaning "familiar," "native," "belonging to the home"; and we are tempted to conclude that what is "uncanny" is frightening precisely because it is *not* known and familiar. (S. Freud, 1919, The "Uncanny"1, First published in *Imago,* Bd. V, reprinted in *Sammlung,* Fünfte Folge, trans. A. Strachey).
[52] S. Freud, 'The 'Uncanny'', *Imago,* Bd. V., repr. *Sammlung,* Fünfte Folge, trans. by Alix Strachey, 1919, p.1.
[53] L. Badley, *Film Horror and the Body Fantastic,* London & Westport, CONN: Greenwood University Press, 1995, p. 11.
[54] Ibd., p. 16.
[55] Ibd., p. 15.

In visual art, images describing the ugly or portrayals of people with some kind of abnormality, can, when these people are represented in a beautiful setting, provide sublimity. A woman with a big scar on her face could be more affective than a beautiful dolly girl. In a similar way Burke carries beauty with an idea of weakness and imperfection. His view could be useful for gaining more understanding of woman portrayals:

They learn to lisp, to totter in their walk, to counterfeit weakness, and even sickness. In all this, they are guided by nature. Beauty in distress is much the most affecting beauty. Blushing has little less power; and modesty in general, which is a tacit allowance of imperfection, is itself considered as an amiable quality, and certainly heightens every other that is so.[56]

A film, like any other art may reach greatness by transforming the ugly (in its nature) to the beautiful. Monsters, for instance gargoyles, represented beautifully in the architecture, became mystified in the other art as well, such as literature, cinema, etc. Moreover, ugliness cannot be represented in the same way as beauty, but gives still the feeling of enjoyment. According to Kant:

The furies, diseases, devastations of war, and the like can, as harmful things, be very beautifully described, indeed even represented in painting; only one kind of ugliness cannot be represented in a way adequate to nature without destroying all aesthetic satisfaction, hence beauty in art, namely, that which arouses loathing.[57]

In my opinion, the gargoyles used in mise-en-scène as the decorative background can sharpen the beauty of woman portrayal. In a second passage treating mise-en-scène I will try to prove that the scary/ugly or, in other words, the contrary to beautiful mise-en-scène, can shed sublime light on a woman portrayal. Moreover, ugly objects in the visual art may give pleasant feelings and effect strongly the spectator's emotions; for instance, loathing could be the similar reaction to a sense of shock, to unexpected things, which is closely related to the feeling of sublime.

2.1.2. The gender of the sublime

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[56] E. Burke, 'A Philosophical Enquiry', in P Shaw, *The Sublime, (The New Critical Idiom)*, London and New York, Routledge, 2006, p.100.
[57] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Berlin and Libau, Lagarde und Friederich, 1790, eng. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. P. Guyer, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 190.

Beauty and sublimity can be characterized differently not only according to the time periods, nations, but also according to gender. Interestingly, according to P. Shaw:

Sublime speech 'ravishes' or rapes the listener; in Burke, the sublime is a virile masculine power, one that is contrasted with its passive feminine counterpart, the concept of the beautiful. Even more explicit in the early Kant is the distinction between the depth and profundity of the masculine sublime and the shallow, slight nature of the feminine beautiful.[58]

A large part of the theory of the sublime is devoted to the discussion on the quality of the sublime and the beautiful in the name of gender. According to P. Shaw, the sublime is 'implicitly masculine, whereas the beautiful is light, fleeting, and charming and implicitly feminine'.[59] This state discriminates the female gender in the sense that the sublime is greater. However, my guess is that the sublime is a convergence of the masculine and the feminine, due to the complexity of the concept.

A problematic issue with the sublime is that it is a very broad concept and embraces many aspects. Lyotard writes, in the work *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, the family story of the sublime. According to the author, the parents of the sublime originate from sensation, but the father is content and the mother is miserable. Lyotard calls the female "judgement", characterized by the artistic; on the other hand, the male is called "reason", characterized by the moralistic. This links to the Kantian philosophy about the sublime in terms of morality and judgement (in his work *Critique of The Power of Judgement*). Moreover, Lyotard claims that the sublime child is "pain and delight": 'the sublime is the child of unhappy encounter, that of the idea of form.'[60] According to Lyotard, the sublime requires one to suffer: 'it must cause "displeasure"'[61]. Moreover, the author summarises that sublime 'needs "presentation", which is the function of the imagination, its mother, and "conceit" - the native illness of servile will - in order to manifest their nullity before the greatness of the law.'[62]

Not only the creativity and mastery are the key elements of the sublime work, the contests between artists (masculine domination) also move them forward.

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[58] P. Shaw, *The Sublime, (The New Critical Idiom)*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 10.
[59] Ibd.,p. 9.
[60] J. F. Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, trans. E Rottenberg, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1991, p. 180.
[61] Ibd., p. 180.
[62] Ibd., p. 181.

According to B. C. Freeman: 'even Plato would not have attained greatness without the need to show his superiority to his rival Homer'[63]. Therefore there is a kind of masculine of competition in art between similar types of artists. On the other hand, according to B. C. Freeman, Sappho's lyrical poetry offers an alternative meaning of the sublime, as it 'entails a struggle for domination in which one party submits to another'[64]. In my opinion, in order to become greater than others there appears a drama of power.

In order to define the sublime woman portrayal it is important to analyse the gender of the sublime in order to trace some coherence between the sublime as a gender and a woman as a representation of femininity. In a traditional classical way the beautiful woman is generally understood as feminine. According to Kant a phrase such that: "That is a beautiful woman", means 'in her figure nature represents the ends in the feminine physique beautifully, for it is necessary to look beyond the mere form to a concept with which the object is thought in such a way through a logically conditioned aesthetic judgment.'[65] Of course, the beautiful woman portrayal face aesthetical judgement of the spectator. In order to create the sublime portrayal of a woman the judgement is even stronger.

The sublimation of the woman is often is expressed in the portrayal of the mother. In my opinion, the mother is a source of transcendence and inspiration. She contains the biggest meaning of existence: she is able to give birth. Moreover, her kind and demanding love can be a source for inspiration. Here visual history provides many examples[66], such as R. Barthe's work *Camera Lucida*, which focuses on his mother's photo portrayals.

To summarise the meaning of the gender of the sublime there is a convergence of both. The sublime and the beautiful could be a tandem not only in theory, but in cinema practice as well, as male director featuring female actor, or

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[63] B C Freeman *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in women's fiction*, University of California Press, 1995, p. 17.

[64] Ibd.,18.

[65] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Berlin and Libau, Lagarde und Friederich, 1790, eng. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. P. Guyer, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 190.

[66] 'As advanced by Freud, sublimation refers to the process by which the libido is transferred from a material object (say, the body of the beloved) towards an object that has no obvious connection with this need (towards, say, the love of God). In Lacan's reworking of Freud this process is reversed: the libido is shifted 'from the void of the "unserviceable". Thing to some concrete, material object of need that assumes a sublime quality the moment it occupies the place of the 'Thing'. The mother is not inherently sublime; rather she becomes sublime because she indicates the void at the heart of symbolization.' J. Lacan and S Žižek, 'From The Sublime to The Ridiculous', in P Shaw, *The Sublime, (The New Critical Idiom)*, London and New York, Routledge, 2006, p.135.

male director inspired by female *muse*, etc. The *happy* marriage (when two genders can complete each other) creates a feeling of the sublime. The example of the Lyotardian family story of the sublime could prove the hypothesis that the sublime is the convergence of the feminine and masculine gender. In cinema, the female actor plays an important role for giving rise to sublime feelings of the spectator. However, in my opinion the source of the sublime in cinematic woman portrayal is the director. He creates the potential energy and visualise it.

2.2. Sublime as hyperreality

The concept of the sublime in cinema could be incorporated with J. Baudrillard's conceptions *real* and *hyper real*. Baudrillard's concept of simulated reality is compared with the classical understanding of reality, which includes dualistic tension, whereas the hyperreality is nuclear and the distinctions between object and subject, true and false, real and unreal are no longer possible. Moreover, Baudrillard suggest the theme of 'produced reality' and mass mediated life in *Simulacra and Simulation*[67]. What is the influence of hyperreality on sublimity in woman portrayals? In my opinion the representation of the loss of referential reality could give more clearness in understanding of the meaning via the sublime.

In the age of mechanical reproduction it becomes easier to simulate the reality. W. Benjamin's work *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* emphasises the term *aura*, which the spectator perceives in the work of art as a sublime invocation or devotion. Moreover, the aura embraces the atmosphere of transcendental beauty. However, W. Benjamin claims that in the age of mechanical reproduction the art is reproduced and no longer unique, and therefore the aura is lost. Is the same happening with the sublime? Interestingly, according to W. Benjamin, the dilemma of aura is connected to the mass movements, were the most powerful agent is the film: 'its social significance, particularly in its most positive form, is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that is, the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage.'[68] However, W. Benjamin lived at a time when film and photography were recent innovations of technology, and

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[67] J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans., S.F. Glaser, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1994.
[68] W. Bejamin, 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit' 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. H Arendt, trans. H. Zohn, New York, Schocken Books, 1968. p. 219.

therefore the aura could vanish in comparison with the painting for instance. In my opinion the film opened a new space for the sublime experience in the terms of potential power. For instance the cinematic portrayals of women had more potential to become sublime, as these were not restricted to visual expression, but also voice, music and sound, movement, various types of the gaze, mimics, pose. The variation can create an intrigue and the beautiful transforms into sublime.

On the other hand, according to Lyotard Postmodern visual art faces, a problem as being unpresentable in presentation itself: 'which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable.[69] Moreover, to represent the un-representable has a tendency to fail: 'baroque vision sublimely expresses the melancholy so characteristic of the period that intertwining of death and desire trenchantly explored by Walter Benjamin'.[70] The melancholia could be a trampling to the truth, as melancholy is like a compost of essential questions and answers to be risen.

What if, in the postmodern time, the world becomes Baudrillardian simulation, 'when the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning.'[71] Would it be the answer to the question mentioned in the introduction, i.e.: how can more meaning be gained m through the understanding of the sublime? Is it possible the make the same interpretation of meaning as times of Longin or even Lyotard? The question contains an answer - another question.

In the postmodern world, inertia and acceleration are dominating, as these increase the productivity. According to J. Baudrillard: 'It is this melancholia of systems that today takes the upper hand through the ironically transparent forms that surround us. It is this melancholia that is becoming our fundamental passion'.[72] However, the experience of the sublime sheds a different light on the outer and inner worlds and provides a connection to completeness.

However, despite Burke's notification 'the sublime was no longer a matter of elevation, but a matter of intensification'[73], we can, in my opinion, gain

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[69] J. F. Lyotard, 'What is Postmodernism', *ed. cit.,* p. 81: "Réponse á la question: qu'est-ce que le post- moderne?" *ed. cit.,* p. 367.
[70] M. Jay, Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-century French Thought, University of California Press, 1993, p. 48.
[71] J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans., S.F. Glaser, Ann Arbor: Michigan, 1994, p. 6.
[72] J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans., S.F. Glaser, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1994, p. 106.
[73] M. Jay, Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-century French Thought, University of California Press, 1993, p. 582.

more meaning through the sublime, as it gives a moment to *muse* (moreover behind every great artist there is always a real muse, who inspired him or her), or, according to M. V. Walton, as 'the truth that burdens the lovers of wisdom is that we must express the inexpressible, and that there is no single expression and neither is there an end.'[74] The sublime experience gives us a sense of universal truth. By reading great literature or observing masterpiece paintings or films, we can reach the deepest essence, what is called truth.

But what is really truth? J. Baudrillard emphasises that melancholia is becoming our fundamental passion and 'melancholia of systems that today takes the upper hand through the ironically transparent forms that surround us'.[75] Moreover, the author claims that:

[…] melancholia is the fundamental tonality of functional systems, of current systems of simulation, of programming and information. Melancholia is the inherent quality of the mode of the disappearance of meaning, of the mode of the volatilization of meaning in operational systems.[76]

In modern times the sublime in art is transformed and becomes important for the understating of the recipient of artworks and the solitude of genius. Lyotard emphasises, in the context of genius solitude and audience affection, the questions 'how the recipient receives and experience works of art?'[77], and 'what does it mean to experience art?'[78]. These questions lead the Kantian philosophy of judgement. Finally, in my opinion, sublime could be gained only through circulation between three objects: geniality, melancholy and perfection.

In cinema sublime feelings rely on circulation between three poles: director, actor and spectator. In my opinion, in order to create a sublime woman portrayal in cinema the methods of representation should be extended beyond general understanding about the concept of sublime or cinematic techniques such as mise-en-scène. B. C. Freeman analysed the sublime language and made a parallel attempt to explain the sublime utterance: 'it is accompanied by a threefold

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[74]M. V. Walton, *Expressing the inexpressible in Lyotard and Pseudo-dionysius: Bearing witness as spiritual exercise*, Lanham, Lexington Booksp, 2013, p 286.
[75] J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans., S.F. Glaser, Ann Arbor: Michigan, 1994, p. 106.
[76] Ibd., p. 106.
[77] J. F Lyotard, *The Sublime and The Avantgarde*, trans. L. Liebman, G. Bennington and M. Hobson, The Inhuman, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p. 39.
[78] Ibd., p. 39.

identification between speaker, message and listener'.[79] On the other hand, there should be a certain distance between these three substances. A key ingredient in the creation of sublime feelings is the intention to display someone as greater than another. If the spectator gets a feeling that a certain actor's portrayal is sublime, the spectator feels small himself. There is even an element of masochism. As mentioned before, the sublime cannot only wonder, but also shock and hurt. On the other, sublime experience could also involve the aspect of narcissism or the *mirror stage*[80] of Lacan. When gazing in the mirror, the spectator experiences two contradictory responses: joy as it 'recognizes' itself with a 'flutter of jubilant activity' and disappointment when it discovers that this image, 'which offers the promise of wholeness and (self-) identity, is in fact a mirage. At this moment the spectator extends not the feeling of anxiety, but gets also a confirmation of his own ideal personality, as wholeness or completeness of himself.

Films can be perfectly cast into the framework of J. Baudrillard's concept *simulation*. Hyperreality contains the models of simulation, when the distance between the model and reality disappears. The pioneering philosopher who opened the problematics of the reality was Kant. In the philosophy of Kant, beauty, sublime and monstrous (Ungeheure) formulate the trilogy (which could be even related to the three psychoanalytic orders of J. Lacan: Symbolic, Real, Imaginary; see for example Sean Homer[81]). If the Lacanian triad in visual culture opens the gates to the better understanding of the perception and representation, Kantian trilogy represents the contact between the two cog wheels (beauty and monstrosity), which makes the third cog wheel (the sublime) turning (see diagram 1). Two concepts are in relation because of the third one: beauty glorifies monstrosity, so there is the glorification of the mediator of the beauty and monstrosity.

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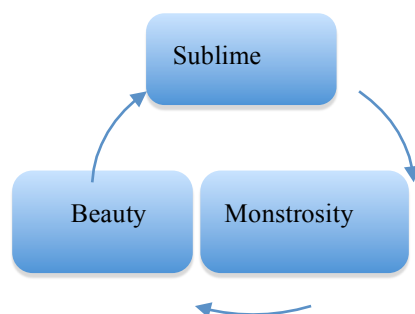
[79] B. C. Freeman, *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in women's fiction*, University of California Press, 1995, p. 16.

[80] J. Lacan and S. Žižek, 'From The Sublime to The Ridiculous', in P. Shaw, *The Sublime, (The New Critical Idiom)*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006, pp.132-133.

[81] S. Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, London, Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2013.

(Diagram 1)

Similarly, in Hegelian philosophy every concept becomes, when reaching the, something different. Applied to the sublime, an object that is absolutely beautiful is not only beautiful, it becomes sublime; moreover, an object being absolutely sublime becomes monstrous. Or in other words, beautiful objects lacking an element of sublimity are not really beautiful; sublime object lacking monstrous elements are not really sublime, only beautiful.

Moreover, in the Schopenhauerian[82] view of thinking there are many gradations of the sublime, and the several ways of transforming beauty into sublime. The author believes that sublime is only an additional quality to beauty. '[…] there come to be various degrees of the sublime, and transitions from the beautiful to the sublime, according as this additional quality is strong, bold, urgent, near, or weak, distant, and merely indicated.'[83] Moreover, A. Schopenhauer thinks '[…] persons whose aesthetical susceptibility in general is not very great, and whose imagination is not very lively, will only understand the examples given later of the higher and more distinct grades of that impression […].'[84]

Sublime feelings could appear in the natural sphere as well as the superficial one (such as cinema). In classical western thinking is often based on ontological structures, so in order to understand J. Baudrillard's concept of the reality, one essential question arises: what is meant by the classical concept of reality? The platonic *allegory of the cave* could provide a partial answer as an illustration of the classical concept of reality, based on sensations (shadows) and ideals (ideas). Moreover, there is the drama between truth and reality (in Baudrillard's words *real* and *hyper real)*. This example could be a postmodern metaphor of the cinema, where a spectator takes part of the world only through a projection on the screen. On the screen, in the theatre, where the spectators cannot see each other in the darkness, the moving pictures become, according to the Platonic view, more real than reality.[85] Of course, this way of seeing and understanding the world is not adequate and the film shots reflect personal experience of the spectator

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[82] Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, 'Kritik des Kantischen Philosophie,' *Zürcher Ausgabe in zehn Bänden,* eng. trans: *The World as Will and Idea*, 7th edn. trans. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp, vol. I of 3., London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1909, p. 268.
[83] Ibd., p. 268.
[84] Ibd., p. 268.
[85] Frederick Charles Copleston, *A history of philosophy*, vol. I, 1993, New York, USA, pp. 161-162.

rather than truth of the subjects/objects. Needless to say the actors, who illustrate the sublime portrayals are not the same as their personages.

As a philosophical concept, the sublime is losing weight in the postmodern world. In the latter, which is dominated by scepticism, inertia and acceleration, reality becomes more intensive, such as Baudrillardian hyperreality, where Disney Land becomes more desirable and real, than the scenery of nature. The form becomes more important rather the content: new ideals, comes from recreating the old ones, visual art occupied by multiplicity of genres, diversity of styles, etc. In the Platonist view the concept of beauty is subjective and embraces our understanding more specifically than can be captured by the human thought[86]. Therefore, according to Platonic philosophy, the ideas exist in the transcendental world together with the sensual experience. In cinema world by sensing/experiencing the cinematic pictures we get a copy of the reality. However, the reality in the cinema gradually becomes hyperreality, the real portrayal of a woman becomes hyper real and the beautiful has intention to become sublime: actors as a shadows of a real humans and mise-en-scène as a reflection of a reality.

Artists seek for new forms to express old ideas. As an example, Lyotard emphasises the importance of "new" and digital technologies, which forces us 'to reconsider the position of the human being in relationship to the Universe, in relationship to himself, in relationship to his traditional purposes, his recognized abilities, his *identity*.'[87] New technologies give a wider space to experiment and express the ideas in a new form.

To gain better understanding about the sublime portrayal of an actor and mise-en-scène as a simulation of reality J. Baudrillard's view on *the divine irreference of images* could be useful. The author claims: 'To simulate is to feign to have what one doesn't have'.[88] But according to the author, simulating is not pretending, 'simulation threatens the difference between the "true" and the "false", the "real" and the "imaginary".'[89] The author thinks that the person who is simulating removes the distance between the reality and the imaginary. Moreover, J. Baudrillard is questioning: 'would simulation be the gates of the unconscious'[90] and

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[86] Ibd., p. 164.
[87] B. Blistène *A Conversation with Jean-François Lyotard*, *Flash Art,* No. 121, March 1985.
[88] J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans., S.F. Glaser, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1994, p. 4.
[89] Ibd., p. 4.
[90] Ibd., p. 4.

gives an answer 'dreams already are'.[91] On the other hand, Baudrillardian theory about hyperreality is provocative, as it does not try to represent the world or to give a certain meaning. He claims that representation is the real world. The image is made because of the image itself, without missing anything behind the image. In other words, the image is narcissistic. Moreover by using signs, symbols or other expression technics like mise-en-scène, mirage or phantasmagoria is created.

A good example of simulation in contemporary visual culture could be Joan Fontcuberta[92] exhibitions[93] such as *Sputnik* (1997) or *Sirens* (2000), where manipulated photos express truthfulness of photography. The mysterious fossils of mermaids, drowns the spectator to recover the magic portrayal of the fairy-tale mermaid (see Fig. 1).

To sum up, the performance of sublime contains the reality in a large scale. According to I. Kant, the sublime is infinite greatness trying to imagine what the human mind cannot convey. Therefore, sublime reality could be hyperreality. Moreover, it is important that a film is not only visually rich, but also has the capacity of providing a feeling of, the sense of meaning.

By taking a theoretical approach to the concept of the sublime I established two hypotheses: first, the sublime portrayal in itself expresses inner greatness and makes the spectator get a sense of smallness, and it has the meaning of that which exceeds the norm; second the sublime is the convergence of the feminine and masculine gender. However, peculiarities of the sublime are not very stringent due to many influential aspects, such as time and space. Moreover, circle diagram could illustrate the characteristics of the sublime: every time when one concept exceeds the norms it can become another concept.

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[91] Ibd., p. 4.
[92] Joan Fontcuberta, from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joan_Fontcuberta.
[93] The exhibition was held at the *Maison Européenne de la Photographie*, in Paris, January 15 – March 16, 2014.

3. MISE-EN-SCÈNE AS A TOOL IN THE CREATION OF SUBLIME WOMAN PORTRAYAL IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

In this chapter, mise-en-scène is presented as an important tool for the creation of atmosphere and sublime feelings within the context of woman portrayals. It will be analysed within the field of film by means of standard cinematic techniques. Through the theoretical odyssey of the sublime and mise-en-scène in the present section, this chapter aims at reaching a better understanding of the role of the mise-en-scène in the cinema. Naturally, one may ask: why is mise-en-scène important in the creation of sublime pictures of woman? The Kantian picture provides a partial answer to this question:

By contrast, a pepper garden where the stakes on which the plants were trained formed parallel rows had much charm for him when he encountered it in the middle of a forest; and from this he infers that wild, to all appearances irregular beauty is pleasing only as a change for one who has had enough of the regular kind.[94]

Here the pepper field and the forest can be viewed as a metaphor for the portrayed object and the mise-en-scène, respectively. Countless films confirm the dominance of this view, which I will try to prove later through a number of examples. Through the history of cinema great male directors, who are able to create the most suitable mise-en-scène where the actress could flourish, generally back up great female actors. For instance, Alfred Hitchcock was featuring Grace Kelly, Mauritz Stiller was a mentor for Greta Garbo, Josef von Sternberg created a cinematic Marlene Dietrich icon, etc.

When trying to explain sublime woman portrayals it is problematic to choose certain director, actor, time period, nationality, etc., due to sublimity is rare and fragmental. The feeling of the sublime should be analysed in another way, through certain characteristics that define the concept of the sublime. For instance, one of the best examples in Hollywood is Josef von Sternberg, who used a special way of lighting and created magical portrayals. The feeling of the sublime is subjective and dependent on many mentioned aspects. For instance, Marlene Dietrich

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[94] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Berlin and Libau, Lagarde und Friederich, 1790, eng. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. P. Guyer, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 126.

might not be sublime for the people in India, where woman ideals are different, while Marlene Dietrich portrayal is flourishing in Hollywood as a special German character with American ideals of beauty. On the other hand, in Bollywood the legend film *Mother India* represents sublime mother portrayal as a mother-goddess in a light of nationalism; the portrayal of an embryonic woman (played by Sandra Bullock) in the *Gravity* might not give the feeling of elevation for the M. Dietrich spectator.

In film history there are many beautiful woman portrayals, but just few of them could give the feeling of the sublime. However, cinema is a perfect sphere where the real could be simulated: the beautiful woman portrayal by using mise-en-scène transformed to the sublime.

3.1. The understanding of portrayal in the mise-en-scène

Ideas and perception carry dialectic lines, which can be understood historically and temporally. The director filtrates the reality trough his lenses and ideals. According to the Jean-Luc Godard, who influenced many film directors (including Leos Carax): 'Cinema, like Christianity, is not grounded in historical truth. It tells a story and says, "Now, believe." Not "have faith in this story as you do in history," but "Believe, whatever happens."'[95] The atmosphere phenomena in the films should be understood with the senses rather than the intellect. The sensation of atmosphere involves the all the physical being of the spectator in terms of perception and thought. As discussed in the book *Hegel's Dialectic of Desire and Recognition* 'human physiology is inserted into hermeneutical field whose own historical articulation includes the relatively autonomous praxes of optics, acoustics, art, and music':

Only through the objectively unfolded richness of man's essential being is the richness of subjective human sensibility (a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form — in short, senses capable of human gratifications, senses confirming themselves as essential powers of man) either cultivated or brought into being.[96]

The spectator can decode the messages according to myths or symbols

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[95] R. Corliss, 'The Best DVD of the Year: Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du Cinema*', *Time Entertainment*, 06 January, 2012, p.1, <http://entertainment.time.com/2012/01/06/the-best-dvd-of-the-year-jean-luc-godards-histoires-du-cinema/#ixzz2iOE3kNR4>.
[96] J. O'Neill, *Hegel's Dialectic of Desire and Recognition: Texts and Commentary,* Albany NY: SUNY Press, 1996, p. 13.

through collective memory or according to his personal experience and memories, but nevertheless he will be influenced by the director's intention. The experience of film is intimately connected with a *Proustian* effect, where small details are attached to personal memories. In my opinion, the experience is a process comprising four steps: firstly, the director creates mise-en-scène; secondly, mis-en-scène creates atmosphere; thirdly, atmosphere influence actor (creates a portrayal) and finally actor affects the spectator.

Each locality has a particular atmosphere and creates so to speak its own magical-mythical aura around itself; it exists only through the fact that certain effects adhere to it, that happiness or harm, divine or demonic powers emanate from it. The whole of mythical space is structured and with it the whole of the mythical world along these magical lines of power[97]. Certain mise-en-scène creates an atmosphere and sheds a special light on the woman portrayal, which can create the feeling of sublime. As the meaning of a certain sentence placed into different contexts may change, the actor in certain mise-en-scène can become whatever the director's eye can imagine.

3.1.1. Framing

In cinema the sublime portrayal of a woman depends on mise-en-scène decisions. In the Film Encyclopaedia[98] mise-en-scène is described as a 'French term - literally, the placing of a scene - for the act of staging or directing a play or a film. Derived from the terminology of the theatre, the term has acquired in recent years an additional meaning in its application to the cinema.'[99] Moreover, there is an emphasis that mise-en-scène is 'the content of the individual frame'[100]. However, everything that is present in the image (sets, characters and props) is *framed*. According to G. Deleuze, framing provides a limitation and gives a parallel explanation to the meaning of sublime, as 'the limits can be conceived in two ways, mathematically or dynamically: either as preliminary to the existence of the bodies whose essence they

[97] E. Cassirer, 'Mythic, aesthetic and theoretical space', *Man and World*, no. 2, 1, 1969, p. 11.
[98] E. Katz, *The Macmillan International Film Encyclopedia,* 4th, Ed., London, Macmillan, 2001.
[99] Ibd., p. 953.
[100] Ibd., p. 953.

fix, or going as far as the power existing bodies goes.'[101] Though, in sublime cinematic portrayals the frame usually is a dynamic construction.

In order to create a sublime woman portrayal the way of *framing* is important. According to G. Deleuze, "the powers of nature are not framed in the same way as people or things, and individuals are not framed in the same way as crowds".[102] The author thinks that there are many different frames in the frame: 'doors, windows, box office windows, skylight, car windows, mirrors, are all frames in frames.'[103] The frame gets physical graduations, and Deleuze summarises: 'framing is the art of choosing the parts of all kinds, which became part of a set.'[104] Therefore, perfection when choosing the framing is essential in order to elevate female portrayal to the feeling of sublime.

The psychological frames such as the effect of globalization or borders can frame woman portrayals. Here the concept of borders is considered very generally, such as the spatial (geographical borders of maps and countries), temporal (gaps between epochs and historical circumstances), cultural (differences between languages, general customs, and traditions), or psychological (mismatches between intentions and expectations on the human level) senses. In the film *Mother India* (Mehboob Khan, 1957) such borders are framing the story of a female character, attached to the ground and the traditions of an Indian village in the late 50's and struggling for national and moral values in a newly independent India. Her portrayal metaphorically represents India as a nation in the aftermath of independence. Her body and all being is an allegorical picture of *Mother India* – by S. Ramaswamy referred to as *Bharat Mata* – 'the female personification of the Indian nation and its territory'[105]. In addition, her portrayal illustrates universal limitations and conflicts on the personal level through the clash between the character's struggle and her roles as a mother and a wife.

Historically, after the independence the borders of India were consolidated, with the intention to prevent any external power or culture from controlling the Indian people. In *Mother India* this is expressed cinematographically

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[101] G. Deleuze, *Cinema 1 The Movement-Image*, trans., H Tomlinson and B Habberjam, USA, University of Minnesota Press, 2003, p.13.
[102] Ibd., p.14.
[103] G. Deleuze, *Cinema 1 The Movement-Image*, trans., H Tomlinson and B Habberjam, USA, University of Minnesota Press, 2003, p.14.
[104] Ibd., p.18.
[105] S. Ramaswamy, 'Maps, Mother/Goddesses, and Martyrdom in Modern India', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 67 (2008), p. 820.

by putting Radha's body into a bold frame of moral and national values. This psychological frame works as a symbol of the country borders of India, which keeps Radha's identity safe from harm and brings her personal safety.

The portrayal of Radha, partaking the character of national mother, is similar to the mythological Mother goddess – the secularisation of Mother goddess into Mother India absorbed with independence nationalistic emphasis on spiritualised motherhood and transformed into secular patriotism. Radha, the heroine and archetypal Indian woman, is painted as a mother courage figure on whose shoulders rests the fate of her family and the villagers. She is exemplifies with a masculine power, as a strong hero, preserving typical traditional values. There is a slight line between orientalist – including Bollywood – culture and the social poetics of the nation state as M. Haldrup refers to as *banal nationalism*[106].

Even though *Mother India* is Indian product and deals exclusively with Indian culture and history, it is clear that the director has been influenced also by western metaphors and allegories, especially those of Christianity. More specifically, Radha can undoubtly be viewed as a female Messias, who sacrifices herself for a higher purpose. The film poster (see Fig. 2) is almost over explicit at this point. Her iconic portrayal should encourage the Indian people to be strong while facing challenges. There is a slight parallel to the picture *Lagaan* (1931)[107], where a man is 'crucified on the cross of lagaan (tax) occupying the outline map of India, with blood from his wounds dripping on to the nation's geobody'[108]. Even though Radha is an icon for a female peasant, she is painted as a goddess possessing divine moral strength. This is significant in the end of the movie, where Radha due to moral elevation kills her own criminal son. Here I find an allegorical connection to the binding of Isaac portrayal, where God commands Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. When the film commences, Radha is of solid age and is shown as a symbolic mother of all villagers. Radha's high morality and national values has turned her into an idol of the villagers. Nevertheless, according to S. Ramaswamy, Radha's portrayal as an anthropomorphic form of Mother India could be questioned: 'It is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind. It is a mighty female power (shakti), composed of all the powers of all the millions of units

[106] M. Haldrup, L. Koefoed, and K. Simonsen, 'Practical Orientalism – Bodies, Everyday Life and the Construction of Otherness', *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography,* 88:2 (2006), p.175.
[107] S. Ramaswamy, 'Maps, Mother/Goddesses, and Martyrdom in Modern India', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 67 (2008), p. 848.
[108] Ibd., p. 848.

that make up the nation'[109]. Radha keeps her almost masculine strength even when storm and flood sweeps destroy the harvest in the village. When some villagers begin to migrate, she decides to stay and rebuild the destroyed land.

Indian portrayals are most often characterised by sensuality. Indian visual culture is complicated to frame and hard to dress in words for a western spectator, as A. Downey claims, visual culture gives, "political and ethical purchase". According to Downey, 'art and politics has a potential to effect shifts in thinking.'[110] Thought in India beautiful woman portrayal usually contained national values. The best way to understand Indian culture is to experience the country through all five senses. Indian culture typically recon even *eleven* senses, indicating the demand put on an Indian filmmaker to provide the audience a sensual experience rather than intellectual experience. In *Mother India* the smell and touch of flowers function as a leading sign – a sensual leitmotif – for crossing the border of the epic narrative film story line. The smell of flowers transfers Radha from the present moment to the past; for instance, the smell of the flowers during a hydroelectric installation opening ceremony leads her memories to her wedding ceremony where she had the same flowers around her neck.

In India woman portrayal are set in a conservative frame, for instance, the wedding is the most important ceremony of Indian culture. In the intro scene of *Mother India*, Radha is shown as a young, coy bride with downturned eyes in a traditional Indian manner. A marriage is a symbol of the unification of two parts, the deletion of boundaries by love, and, at the same time, an act of consolidation of the population and – the nation.

The iconic woman portrayal in oriental culture has changed drastically over the 70 years. However some characteristics, such as woman's masculine strength in order to reach her goals, feminine kindness with the people around still the same, faith to the family and the national values. In the mentioned film the convergence of contrasts, such as strength and fragility, beauty and harshness has a tendency extend the beautiful woman portrayal to the sublime.

3.1.2. Close-up and gaze

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[109] Ibd., p. 830.
[110] Anthony Downey, *Zones of Indistinction: Giorgio Agamben's 'Bare Life' and the Politics of Aesthetics*, in: *Third Text,* vol. 23, Issue 2, March 2009, p. 125.

In cinematic terms the portrayal is often framed in *close-up* shots. Moreover, the close-up, according to Deleuze, is 'the affection-image, and the close-up is the face.'[111] In order to make powerful portrayal the close-up shot plays an essential role, as the director Eisenstein says: 'close-up give an affective reading of the whole film.'[112] Usually, in the film poster the main idea of the film is represented by the portrayal of the main actor placed in certain mise-en-scène. Though, what creates the power and quality of a portrayal? Does the face in the close-up shot carry just the face reflection or more things? What is the difference between close-up a portrayal and a sublime close-up portrayal?

In order to make a sublime woman portrayal the main techniques of the director rely on closeness, i.e. that the camera gives close-ups of the woman faces. This exemplifies how close-up of the face can be a useful and efficient key to embarrassingly close and radically elongated moments at which the expression of the woman faces are transformed to sensory effect on the spectator. Here the subjects are reduced to pure flesh, wrinkles, mouth, nose, hair, eyes, and mimics, providing an example of what Laura U. Marks refers to as "haptic visuality", i.e. 'images, which foreground "material presence" through extreme close-ups and unusual framing strategies, engendering a mode of spectatorship in which the eyes themselves function like organs of touch'[113]. Close-up shots put the viewer into an intimate engagement in which a range of uncomfortable feelings are opened up, shared, and laid bare. The mentioned technique is a cornerstone in film making, as the human face provides – with the view of e.g. the Swedish director Ingmar Bergman.

In order to create a sublime close-up portrayal the thoughts of the actor at the present moment are important. On the other hand, the mise-en-scène of the film creates a certain mood that may inspire the actor to think in a certain way. The eyes play a crucial role for expressing the thoughts of the actor. *The gaze* of the actor transfers a certain message, not only from the actor, but from the director as well. In my opinion, sublime feeling could be transferred by the Lacanian gaze, i.e. when the actor turns his gaze directly to the spectator. This gaze usually is sharp, even painful, profound and unexpected as the characteristics of the sublime. The classical example could be Monika's gaze (see Fig. 3) in the I. Bergman film *Summer with Monika*

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[111] G. Deleuze, *Cinema 1 The Movement-Image*, trans., H Tomlinson and B Habberjam, USA, University of Minnesota Press, 2003, p. 87.
[112] Ibd., p. 87.
[113] L. Nagib, C. Perriam, R. Dudrah, Theorising World Cinema, London, I. B. Tauris, 2012 p. 188.

(*Sommaren med Monika*, 1953). The Lacanian formulation of the gaze, a certain technique, being a signature of Bergman, consisting in mentally moving the spectator, via a sudden eye to eye interference with the character on the screen, from a position of exclusion to a state of full involvement in the scene, an involvement that completely undermine the sense of control and safety associated with the first position. This re-location of the gaze should be viewed as a counterpart to the famous *memento mori* formulated by Lacan in his the study of Hans Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors* (1533).

By following closely Lacan's original formulation and defining the *object* in the field of the visible as the gaze, the approach taken in the present talk differs to that typically taken in classical Lacanian film theory, which – as the result of a misreading of Lacan - focuses on the identification of the spectator with a gaze of *mastery*. The film *Summer with Monika* is characterized by an intimate interplay between the actor and the camera. As a result we obtain characteristic scene offering a very strong sense of re-location of the gaze. To conclude, the psychodynamic model associated with Lacanian gaze provides a surprisingly powerful tool for interpreting the strong visual expression arising from this – now classical – scene.

3.1.3. Sets and props

The important part of mise-en-scène is *set and props*, which help to create the certain atmosphere. According to J. Alton: 'All articles that are used to decorate the set, be they furniture, glassware, flowers, or silk curtains, are called "props".'[114] Set is understood as 'to put something in a particular place or position. If a story, film, etc. is set in a particular time or place, its action happens in that time or place: "West Side Story" is set in New York in the late 1950s.'[115] Nowadays by using new technologies directors have more possibilities to create a perfect mise-en-scène for the film. One such example of sets and props could be taken from the recent movie *Gravity* (2013), which contains a scene where the main actor Sandra Bullock is pictured in a floating embryonic position (see Fig. 4).

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[114] J. Alton, *Painting with Light*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1995, p. 18.
[115] See 'set': http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/set_1?q=set

The careful mise-en-scène creates an iconic moment in the airlock, which gives a transformational power. When in the film content technologies fail the main character struggles between the material and the spiritual, woman fight makes her character profound i.e., sublime. J. Baudrillard calls the body a medium and technology 'an extension of the body'.[116] On the other hand the author says that: 'technology is the mortal deconstruction of the body – no longer a functional medium, but the extension of death – the dismemberment and cutting to pieces, not in the pejorative illusion of a lost unity of the subject'.[117] The sunrise from the window port gives a special light on main character's face and the cords around her body make her look as an umbilical coil. Perfectly chosen props and set supported woman portrayal to look sublime. For many spectators, this shot, which could give a feeling of immortality or some kind of re-birth, is most presumably associated with feelings of sublimity. According to A. Jones: 'the image-and perhaps especially the photograph, which freezes the subject at a past moment in time-is death'.[118]

In the films are many possibilities to manipulate the reality and of course props and sets has a big part. The atmosphere of the film depends from the vision of director, script, nationality, political view, and many other issues, which creates the *reality* of the film. Moreover by using certain cinematic technics such as mise-en-scène it is easier to manipulate and recreate the reality, for instance a certain lighting, clothes, make up, sets and props, etc., can make actor to look more beautiful, even sublime.

3.2. The importance of lighting

In the dark there is mystery.[119]

Viewed historically, some types of lighting, such as searchlights or street lighting, were not necessarily developed for cinematic purposes, but were later explored as lighting in films. Specific styles of cinema lighting arose in response to technologies

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[116] J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans., S.F. Glaser, Ann Arbor: Michigan, 1994, p. 75.
[117] Ibd., p. 75.
[118] A. Jones, 'Body', in *Critical Terms for Art History,* ed. RS Nelson and R Shiff, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 258.
[119] J. Alton, *Painting with Light*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1995, p. 44.

that already existed, and many other technical innovations were the result of experiments by directors. In spite of historical variation, certain conventions concerning lighting styles have developed. The lighting in the cinema has been broadly analysed by writers such as John Alton[120], David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thomson[121], Charles Higham[122], Vincent LoBrutto[123], Ross Lowell[124], Kris Malkiewicz[125], Barry Salt[126], etc.

In the work *Painting with Light* by the Hollywood cinematographer J. Alton determines three main lighting aesthetics that he appointed *comedy, drama* and *mystery*[127]. In this analysis through the lenses of the sublime, drama and mystery are important. Although, according to the author, drama is opposite to comedy (which should be brightly lit with low contrasts in order to create an overall mood of gaiety). The drama should vary its lighting schemes according to the tonalities of the narrative situation, while mysterious lighting, used in horror films, is characterized by a *low key* approach that swathes much of the set in deep shadow: 'where there is no light, one cannot see; and when one cannot see, his imagination starts to run wild. He begins to suspect that something is about to happen.'[128] The development of different types of lighting equipment has expanded the range of lighting methods.

Speaking from the technical point, lighting is the control of light that bounces off objects within mise-en-scène and reflects back into the lenses of the camera recording the shot. In order to create different film affects lighting can be implemented in many different ways, such as fall off, three point lighting system, high and low key lighting, butterfly, etc. (see e.g. Ross[129] or John Alton[130]).

In order to create a perfect lighting for the portrayal, the close-up

[120] Ibd.,1995.

[121] D. Bordwell, J Staiger & K Thomson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1985.

[122] C. Higham, *Hollywood Cameramen: Sources of Light*. Bloomington: University of Illinois Press, 1970.

[123] V. LoBrutto, *Principal Photography: Interviews with Feature Film Cinematographers*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999.

[124] R. Lowell. *Matters of Light and Depth: Creating Memorable Images for Video, Film, and Stills through Lighting*. Philadelphia: Broad Street Press, 1992.

[125] K. Malkiewicz, *Film Lighting: Talks with Hollywood's Cinematographers and Gaffers*. New York, Prentice-Hall, 1986.

[126] B. Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis.* 2nd ed. London, Starword, 1992.

[127] J. Alton, *Painting with Light*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1995, 34.

[128] Ibd., p. 44.

[129] R. Lowell. *Matters of Light and Depth: Creating Memorable Images for Video, Film, and Stills through Lighting*. Philadelphia, Broad Street Press, 1992.

[130] J. Alton, *Painting with Light*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1995, 1995.

lighting is important. The standard lighting scheme for classical narrative cinema is *three point lighting* system, which has developed over time in film history in order to give rise to aesthetical effect. This system contains three lights: a *key light*, a *fill light* and a *backlight[131]*. The precise angles of lighting in this system can be a way to create the desired visual effect; for instance, in order to design an actor's face with a feeling of depth, the correct choice is to use light from three directions: a backlight picks out the subject from its background, a bright key light highlights the object and a fill light from the opposite side ensures that the eye light casts only faint shadows. These lighting devices used together can make the subject to look more natural. In order to use different lighting technics the most important issue is a purpose. When J. Alton discusses special *dream lighting* he points:

It is one thing to give a musical comedy a dreamlike lighting, and another to illuminate a scene depicting a dream. There is no limit in lighting scenes of this nature. One really can go from the sublime to the ridiculous and get away with it. The more original the lighting of a dream and the more imagination used, the more effective it can be. For such scenes it helps to design illogical sets sprinkled with odd shadows.[132]

The relationship between lighting and different kinds of narrative shows the extent to which filmmakers have adopted lighting as an important narration tool, and emphasizes the fundamental role that lighting plays in shaping the atmosphere of films. Instead of controlling the light a lack of light control can sometimes be used as a special way of lighting. Lighting has an effect on the overall atmosphere of the film and can be used in a dramatic way to create a strong visual expression. Moreover according to K Bloomer: 'shadow is darkness, and darkness is a force belonging to mystery and sublimity rather than to beauty and perfection'.[133] Lighting can be a key element in order to create a sublime portrayal. The lighting coupled with the sets and props helps the spectator to experience get feelings of sublimity or mystery as well as a slight shock.

[131]T. Corrigan, P. White, The Film Experience: An Introduction, Boston, New York, Bedford/St. Martin's, third ed., p. 59.
[132] J. Alton, *Painting with Light*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1995, p. 65.
[133] Kent Bloomer, 'Shadows in Ruskin's Lamp of Power, places' (Quarterly Journal of Environmental Design) vol. 2, no. 4, 1985, 61-66, p.63.

4. THE JOSEF VON STERNBERG AND MARLENE DIETRICH COUPLING: *SCARLET EMPRESS* AND *SHANGHAI EXPRESS*

In the history of cinema one of the best examples of perfectionistic use of mise-en-scène in order to create a sublime portrayal of women is Josef von Sternberg and his muse Marlene Dietrich. The director was a master of mise-en-scène (especially lighting) and created the glamorous Dietrich figure. As Dietrich said: 'for some synonymous with movie glamour, for others epitomising Weimar culture'.[134] Erica Carter calls Dietrich the prodigal daughter and claims that 'her success as a German star in Hollywood makes her an illuminating figure for any study of 1930s Germany's negotiation of Hollywood stardom.'[135] Moreover, E. Carter remarks, 'she is a different case, since she embodies in a single star image both the characteristic qualities of Hollywood stardom, and of both an actual and (in her films) a fictional German identity.'[136] However, doubtlessly, J. von Sternberg's played a significant role for making Dietrich a cinematographic icon.

The standard critical line is that without cine-magician von Sternberg, there would be no Dietrich; the less supportable exaggeration of this contention is that only the seven Dietrich-von Sternberg collaborations merit serious discussion. If von Sternberg deserves credit for sculpting her image and breathing life in to this goddess, then let us applaud implacable Marlene with variations on a theme of mysterious enticement […].[137]

As was mentioned in the first chapter, the postmodern era characterised more by style and less by meaning. By using mise-en-scène the film crew have tools to create a visually rich film, even though the fact that the film has a rich visual expression does not mean it has depth. For instance, Josef von Sternberg has his own rich visual style, sometimes at the cost of meaning. However, the domination of the woman portrayal (Dietrich) in his films takes the entire place. Rather than being an actor, she is the centre around which the film is spinning, and all mise-en-scène is concentrated on sharpening her essence.

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[134] *The BFI Companion to German Cinema*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser, London, British Film Institute, 1999, 65.

[135] *The German Cinema Book*, ed., Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter & Deniz Gokturk, London, British Film Institute, 2002, p. 74.

[136] Ibd., p. 751.

[137] International Dictionary of Films and Filmakers- 3 *Actors and Actres*, ed. Amy L. Unterburger, 3th ed. USA, St. James Press, 1997, p. 336.

4.1. The coupling of Marlene Dietrich and Josef von Sternberg

Josef von Stenberg used accurate mise-en-scène techniques (e.g., he gave a lot of attention to the lighting) and created a special relation between the camera and Dietrich in order to celebrate her face. Even later, when Dietrich started to work with other directors she got tools, how to prepare her self for a shooting in order to get aesthetic attraction.

The creation of the mise-en-scène involves the whole team. Speaking about the camera, which presents the performance of the film actor to the public in the work *Dietrich icon*[138], '[…] traditional discourses of art, creativity and aesthetic beauty are of no use to understand why Dietrich's face fascinates'.[139] In his films, von Sternberg was able to evoke a dreamlike atmosphere that made Dietrich an exotic woman and an icon of decadence.

In the BBC documentary *The World of Josef von Sternberg* the director demonstrates lighting and camera techniques and emphasises the importance of the light. Moreover, carefully chosen close-ups shed a special light on the Dietrich face. By giving power to her he gave power to the film. He was a perfectionist in the creation of the mise-en-scène. In one TV interview von Sternberg said:

Most of my work was done in opposition of the work that was done by other people. Of course I have no traceable influence to motion pictures, but my influence, if there are any, are from literature and painting and other arts, which I then incorporate into the film. I am afraid in most cases I not only supervise, but I actually do it and I do the decorations, the costumes and write the story and to control the actors and make the props and cut the pictures. I do the entire thing.[140]

His background as a photographer may explain the fact that von Sternberg's production was more visually focused and that entered the cinema world as a cameraman. In an interview von Sternberg emphasises the importance of this background: 'I had a vast history in films from every viewpoint before I became a director and I think it is quite essential that a director should have that experience.'[141]Moreover, according to D. A. Cook for von Sternberg the image was

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[138] G. Gemunden & MR Desjardins, *Dietrich Icon*, Duke University Press, USA 2007.
[139]L. Koepnick *Dietrich face*, pp. 43-59 in the G. Gemunden & M.R. Desjardins, *Dietrich Icon*, Duke University Press, USA, pp. 54-55, 2007.
[140] Marlene Dietrich - Josef von Sternberg - 1967 Interview - 1/2.wmv [running time: 00.01.57-00.02.47] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DX7sll9Gug (accessed 17 October 2013).
[141] Marlene Dietrich - Josef von Sternberg - 1967 Interview - 1/2.wmv [running time: 00.04.04-00.04.28] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DX7sll9Gug (accessed 17 October 2013).

'the only true medium of cinematic art'.[142]

4.2. The sublime woman portrayal: Shanghai Express and The Scarlet Empress

According to David A. Cook, in the sound era von Stenberg films were decadent and quite bizarre. In these films, such as *Shanghai Express* (1932), or *The Scarlet Empress* (1934), his protégée Marlene Dietrich is displayed as the archetypical *femme fatale* in exotic settings: 'in these virtually (and deliberately) content-less films, von Stenberg achieved a degree of visual elegance, which has led one critic to describe them as "poems in fur and smoke".'[143] In the mentioned films the story line and the script are not overly impressive (as von Sternberg focused on visual elements rather narrative ones), but visually rich scenes elevate the film to a dreamlike atmosphere. According to D. A. Cook, with *Shanghai Express* von Sternberg '[…] entered his richest period of creativity. Herman G. Weinberg has called this film '"High cinema - baroque", and it is certainly one of the most visually evocative that the director ever made.'[144] The setting of the film is on an express train running from Peking to Shanghai, where the main characters are the glamorous prostitute *Shanghai Lily* (Marlene Dietrich) and her lover from the British army (Clive Brook).

The poetic encounters between Dietrich and Brook on the observation deck of the express, and the long lateral tracking shots down the latticed corridors of the cars themselves - all constructed in the studio - achieve a visual saturation rare outside of German Expressionism and the later work of Eisenstein.[145]

In the film the precision of mise-en-scène, the stylised pictures become the theme itself. According to D. A. Cook, 'von Stenberg created a mythological

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[142] 'Strongly influenced by graphic art his greatest films constituted a kind of painting with light. It is fruitless to maintain that his plots are trivial or frivolous, because von Sternberg was not attempting to create a narrative cinema. […] Von Stenberg's great achievement was to create *within* the American narrative cinema, a cinema of mood and atmosphere based upon European styles of camera composition and lighting and his own eccentric vision of human passion and desire. It was a cinema of exoticism, eroticism, and, ultimately, cultural decadence, but one of astounding sensuous beauty which is unique in the history of film and modern art'. D. A. Cook, A History Of Narrative Film, 2nd ed., Emory University, W. W Norton & Company, New York, London, 1990, p. 324.
[143] D. A. Cook, *A History Of Narrative Film*, 2nd ed., Emory University, W. W Norton & Company, New York, London, 1990, p. 306.
[144] Ibd., p. 322.
[145] Ibd., p. 322.

China where "dead space" is virtually absent.'[146] The lyrical abstraction in von Sternberg's films exceeds deferent aspects of colours. According to Deleuze: 'light no longer has to do with darkness, but with the transparent, the translucent or the white.'[147] Moreover, Deleuze emphasises that von for Stenberg's darkness marks the place where the light stops.[148]

In order to make a portrayal one of the most appreciated lighting in Hollywood is called *butterfly*, involving only two lights. In Josef von Sternberg film *The Scarlet Empress* (see Fig. 5) the key light is placed above (a bit higher than in a three-point lighting plan) and the second light is a rim light. The strong light falling on Marlene Dietrich face creates a bridge of the nose and the upper cheeks and distinct shadow below the nose. According to J. Alton, close-ups lit by direct sunlight are not always beautiful and such a picture of a feminine star would hardly make a prize portrayal:

Most directors of photography prefer to have the close-ups of their stars made inside against artificial backings, stereos, or process plates, where they have full control of their lights. If this is not possible, it is necessary is too strong and too high to eliminate or use as backlight, then we use a butterfly.[149]

Deleuze emphasises that in von Sternberg's films, everything is happening between the white and light, where the space corresponding to the luminous and into this space is inserted a close-up face, which reflects the light. The author mentions two scenes in the film *The Scarlet Empress*, where in the first scene the face of a young girl is framed in the narrow space by a white wall and a white door that she closes. In the second scene, at the birth of her son, the face of the woman is caught between the white of a voile curtain and the white of the pillow and the sheets where she is resting (see Fig. 6):

The white space itself is in turn circumscribed, redoubled by a veil or a net which is superimposed, and gives it a volume, or rather what one calls in oceanography (but also in

[146] Ibd., p. 322.

[147] G. Deleuze, *Cinema 1 The Movement-Image*, trans., H. Tomlinson and B Habberjam, USA, University of Minnesota Press, 2003, p. 93.

[148] '[…] Shadow is not a mixture, but merely a result, a consequence - a consequence that cannot be separated from its premises. What are these premises? It is transparent, translucent or white space that has just been defined. Such a space retains the power to reflect light, but it also gains another power, which is that of refracting, by diverting the rays, which cross it. The face, which remains in this space, thus reflects a part of the light, but refracts another part of it. From being reflexive, it becomes intensive.' Ibd., p. 94.

[149] J. Alton, *Painting with Light*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1995, p. 116.

painting) a shallow depth. Sternberg has a great practical knowledge of linens, tulles, muslins and laces: he draws from them all the resources of a white on white within which the face reflects the light.[150]

In the mentioned portrayal (see again Fig. 6), M. Dietrich's gaze is full of wonder. The feeling of wonder is important in the portrayal as it makes it more alive and to wonder the spectator as well. According to Deleuze:

The aspect of wonder can affect an impassive face which is pursuing an impenetrable or criminal thought: but it can equally take possession of a juvenile or curious face, so animated by little movements that these dissolve and are neutralised (thus in Sternberg, The Scarlet Empress - a girl again - looks in all directions and is surprised by everything when the Russian envoys take her away).[151]

Moreover, the feeling of wonder sharpens the contrast of light and darkness on her face. In order to gain better understanding of the von Sternberg style of lighting it is worth to compare his style with other directors, for instance I. Bergman. According to Deleuze, in Ingmar Bergman's film *Summer with Monika* there are very fine 'camera looks' that establish a total reflection and give the close-up a distance which is proper to it (I refer again to Fig. 3), while in Sternberg films:

At the same time as the luminous rays manifest a deviation in space, the face - that is, the affection image is displaced, raised in the shallow depth, darkened at the edges, and enters an intensive series depending on whether the figure slides towards the dark edge, or the edge slides towards the light figure.[152]

Close-ups maintain the power to draw the image away from the spatio-temporal sphere in order to bring forth the intensity of the face. The affect and the background lose its importance. 'Bergman is undoubtedly the director who has been most insistent on the fundamental link, which unites the cinema, the face and the close-up: 'Our work begins with the human face'.[153]

In the film *The Scarlet Empress*, M. Dietrich's romantic portrayal (Catherine) was placed into a historical melodrama. The film was based on episodes from the private diaries of Catherine the Great, which according to the Cook 'was re-created eighteenth-century Russia with as much poetic license as *Shanghai Express*

[150] G. Deleuze, *Cinema 1 The Movement-Image*, trans., H.. Tomlinson and B Habberjam, USA, University of Minnesota Press, 2003, p. 93.
[151] G. Deleuze, *Cinema 1 The Movement-Image*, trans., H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam, USA, University of Minnesota Press, 2003, p. 89.
[152] Ibd., p. 95.
[153] Ibd., P.99.

had re-created contemporary China, and yet was visually more sumptuous than the original could have ever been.'[154] Moreover, in my opinion, the contrastive mise-en-scène elevated Dietrich's portrayal from the beautiful to the sublime. For instance, surrounded by the vanity of the Russian empire, Dietrich's character becomes unique, and her face becomes even more innocent and elevated by ugly, grotesque gargoyles statues and her weird husband (see Fig. 7). She exemplifies the theoretical point of Kantian pepper: if she would be surrounded by other beautiful girls she would not possess the same charm as when she is alone surrounded by almost barbarian people. Moreover, the set and props are gothic, decorated with candelabras and strange gigantic architectural formations, which could work as a metaphor of the forest. Dietrich, with Kant's words, 'infers that wild, to all appearances irregular beauty is pleasing only as a change for one who has had enough of the regular kind'.[155]

At first, the main character of Catherine (Dietrich) is portrayed as a good daughter and a dutiful wife. In the first part of the film I would call her portrayal beautiful, in the sense of beauty as described in the theoretical part: light, fleeting, charming, etc. (see Marlene Dietrich and John Lodge in the introductory scene[156]). In the second part of the film, her passion for Count Alexey changes her manner. Catherine starts to use her feminine strategies in order to get what she wants. She transforms herself, an innocent girl, into a confident woman, who knows her value (see video *The Scarlet Empress - Josef von Sternberg retrospective 31*[157]). For the people around she starts to feel dangerous. Moreover, in this film Dietrich's portrayal is sexually suggestive. She begins to take the control in her hands and starts to be dominative, i.e., characteristics that are typically referred to as masculine. With this transformation example I could prove the hypothesis that sublime is a convergence of feminine and masculine gender.

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[154] D. A. Cook, A History Of Narrative Film, 2nd ed., Emory University, W. W Norton & Company, New York, London, 1990, p. 323.

[155] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Berlin and Libau, Lagarde und Friederich, 1790, eng. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. P. Guyer, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 126

[156] 'The Scarlet Empress (1934)', [online video], 2011, [running time: 00.00.07-00.03.05], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ho98EzV4o0&list=PLQZWI6IixPSucbdYo36rWdmgYemSnOrNU (accessed 17 October 2013).

[157] 'The Scarlet Empress - Josef von Sternberg retrospective 31', [online video], 2011, [running time: 00.00.15-00.03.46], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RG7RLXvMJJc&list=PLQZWI6IixPSucbdYo36rWdmgYemSnOrNU. (accessed 17 October 2013).

From being a beautiful girl she becomes an example of a sublime woman portrayal, and with the political power she reaches maximum of sublimity - monstrosity. In the theory of Kant it was mentioned that an object is monstrous by its magnitude and '[…] the end of the presentation of a concept is made more difficult if the intuition of the object is almost too great for our faculty of apprehension'.[158] Dietrich's persona becomes powerful, and the spectator does not even know what to expect from her next. Her portrayal exceeds general norms.

According to D. A. Cook, '*The Scarlet Empress* apotheosized Dietrich as the ultimate symbol of sexual domination and degradation.'[159] Moreover, the film exemplifies the Kantian circle beautiful-sublime-monstrous. Through contrastive mise-en-scène (light and dark lighting, gothic set and props, such as gargoyles) he extended the norms of a beautiful woman portrayal by creating the feeling of the sublime. Moreover, sound design and von Sternberg's perfection in choosing mise-en-scène, created a hyper-realistic atmosphere, which makes Dietrich portrayal even more powerful. In my opinion darkness creates depth/mystery/questions, and depth at the bottom of all art is something that illuminates the portrayal.

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[158] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Berlin and Libau, Lagarde und Friederich, 1790, eng. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. P. Guyer, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000p. 136.
[159] D. A. Cook, A History Of Narrative Film, 2nd ed., Emory University, W. W Norton & Company, New York, London, 1990, p. 323.

5. WOMAN PORTRAYALS IN PHANTASMAGHORICAL ATMOSPHERE: A CASE STUDY OF TWO WORKS BY LEOS CARAX AND SHARUNAS BARTAS

The aim of this empirical part is to analyse woman portrayals in phantasmagorical atmosphere created by the mise-en-scène in the films *Holy Motors* (2012) and *The House* (1997) by the French director Leos Carax and the Lithuanian director Sharunas Bartas, respectively. Even though the directors are from different countries and do not have similar filmographies, I felt, when watching the two mentioned works, something essentially similar for both. The connection between the two directors is hard to put into words, but comes from the way they shed light on woman portrayals and create a special phantasmagorical atmosphere in their films. For instance, the location of *Holy Motors* is in Paris, which sometimes looks in a dreamlike, surrealistic atmosphere, which could describe W. Benjamin's words: '[...] the spectacle of Paris as a '"phantasmagoria" — a magic-lantern show of optical illusions, rapidly changing size and blending into one another'.[160] Moreover in J. Baudrillard concept "phantasmagoric" means 'dreamlike, disorienting, up to Crash'.[161] However, using the mise-en-scène technique, I will try to recognise some essential elements behind the camera that are common for the two directors and create a surrealistic, almost sublime atmosphere.

This section is organised as follows: after having provided some background, I investigate how mise-en-scène, especially in the forms of lighting music, and sound, are used for creating a phantasmagorical atmosphere and aesthetics in the two films. Moreover, I study how the hyper real, dreamlike atmosphere and aesthetics of the film affect the portrayals of women.

5.1. Phantasmagorical atmosphere

Atmosphere is a key ingredient for creating sublime woman portrayals. There are a myriad of ways of creating *atmosphere* in film and certain techniques,

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[160] S. Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing. Walter Benjamin and The Arcades Project*, London, MIT Press,
1991, p. 81.
[161] J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans., S.F. Glaser, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1994, p. 83.

like *mise-en-scène,* that can be useful for this purpose. By choosing certain mise-en-scène, the director creates a specific atmosphere. Mise-en-scène is generally the technique used by a director to set the mood of his film. Concerning atmosphere and certain techniques for creating mood, the director's and the spectator's perception play an essential role. When starting an analysis of the dialectics of atmosphere through the mise-en-scène path, the way of *observing* is crucial.

Paradoxically, in many cases the purpose of the director is not only to create a dreamlike atmosphere, but also to awake (shock) the spectator from the same. In *Holy Motors* and *The House*, modern reality brings the possibility of criticism. Real life becomes surrealistic, and there is no distance between reality and the world of dreams. Surrealists intentionally put themselves in a oniric state of mind in order to record the images of what modern reality has become; cf. Benjamin's view on the dream as 'a collective phenomenon'.[162] Surrealists revelled in this dream experience, which, for all their public display of it, belonged to an individual, private world, wherein action had anarchistic political implications.

Neither *Holy Motors* nor *The House* have a moral intention, and the visual pictures do not provide a didactic or a moral message *written on your nose*. While watching *The House* I sense images without plot, explanations or meanings, opening up the observer's mind for introspection. The tempo of the film is slow, giving enough time for the spectator to think. According to Benjamin:

If industrialization has caused a crisis in perception due to the speeding up of time and the fragmentation of space, film shows a healing potential by slowing down time and, through montage, constructing "synthetic realities as new spatio-temporal orders wherein the "fragmented images" are brought together "according to a new law".[163]

In both films, each introductory scene consists in a waking up. In *The House*, the main character, a young man, a metaphorical *flâneur*, wakes up, washes his face in the bathroom and starts his dreamlike, allegorical journey by walking slowly through the corridors and rooms of the building with the purpose of observing the other inhabitants. The house could be viewed symbolically as a space for a game, where the inhabitants are like chess pieces, a picture that also appears in the film in a scene where a black man plays chess with himself.

[162] S. Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing. Walter Benjamin and The Arcades Project*, London, MIT Press,
1991, p. 260.
[163] Ibd., p. 268.

The life in the house is full of surrealistic portrayals, making it phantasmagorical. It is natural to see connections to the essays of W. Benjamin, where phantasmagoria is associated with the experience of material and intellectual concepts. Just like W. Benjamin emphasizes phantasmagorical power of the commodity, Sharunas Bartas is sharpening the contrast between the material and immaterial worlds, which is exemplified by the film poster of the *House* (see Fig. 8): the portrait of a woman, the portrait of the main character of the film, and the picture of the house, which seems to be a bridge between these two portraits.

Some scenes in *Holy Motors* remind of afterimages, for instance, the shots of the streets of Paris with altered unnatural colours look like inverted and contrasted afterimages. Benjamin conjures afterimages with the aim of provoking what he refers to as 'profane illumination'.[164] During the film, the main character Oscar (Denis Lavant) is passing through the streets of Paris while getting hallucinatory evocations: streets do not look as usual and are painted in hallucinogenic colours, like x-ray pictures, through the gaze of the main character. As W. Benjamin writes: 'to the eye that shuts itself when faced with this experience there appears an experience of complementary nature as its almost spontaneous afterimage'.[165] This way of creating could be related to the W. Benjamin's concept "phantasmagoric quality": 'a blend of machine technologies and art galleries, military cannons and fashion costumes, business and pleasure, synthesized into one dazzling visual experience.'[166] In surrealistic atmosphere woman portrayals get a phantasmagorical light, which creates the feeling of affect, grandest, even monstrosity. These feelings are closely related to the feeling of sublime.

In both films the main character is a man, maybe functioning as an alter ego of the director. Also both directors address their films to a contemplative spectator, who they give time to digest the impressions. On the other hand, Leos Carax's film *Holy Motors* consists of many different situations taking part during one day and involving the main character Oscar. The spectator can experience what it means to be a child of the modern world. Through Oscar's transformation into different characters (male, female, young, old, rich, poor, etc.), the spectator gets a

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[164] W. Benjamin, Surrealism: The last snapshot of the European intelligentsia. *New Left Review*, no. 78, 1978, p.108.
[165] S. Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing. Walter Benjamin and The Arcades Project*, London, MIT Press,
1991, p. 312.
[166] Ibd., p. 85.

possibility to sense a whole spectrum of human experiences. Sometimes the spectator might even get a feeling of having seen the scenes before. Like a chameleon, Oscar professionally transforms himself into other characters by changing clothes, make-up, accessories, and mentality. The spectator gets a chance to take a voyage behind camera, and to take part of the many practical details of filmmaking, such as acting and costuming. In one scene, Oscar wears a black costume covered by white sensors. An erotic scene with a blond female shows motion captures technology. The convergence of the mythical symbol of the serpentine and modern life technologies transforms woman into a transcendental creature. L. Carax uses this woman portrayal also on the film poster (see Fig. 9) where the female figure shines even more in the darkness of Paris. The Eiffel tower in the background elevates her figure even more.

The City becomes a place of dreams, which evokes expectations, symbols, and myths. Like in W. Benjamin's writings, the spectator senses how the visual images (surroundings) change while travelling along the streets of the metropolis. The scenes of *Holy Motors* are imaginary, and the director leaves an open road for the spectator's intuition for revealing surrealistic pictures. The film consists of different portrayals; between these the story returns back to the white limousine, which becomes a connecting component between the different stories. The main character is travelling from one film episode to another, while he is preparing for the next so-called "appointment" (providing a new situation or episode in the film) in the limousine, where he keeps all necessary equipment (make-up table, mirror etc.). As the white limousine in the film moves along the streets of Paris the main character gets the possibility to observe the city through the car window. He is the urban spectator and through his emblematic character the spectator senses the alienation and capitalism in the city. The film expresses contrastive lines between richness and poorness (e.g. the limousine travelling along the majestic streets of Paris in contrast to the immigrants gathering in the tunnels under the city). The main character is involved in crime episodes as well, for instance, by killing, with a knife, a person who looks exactly like himself. In different episodes, Oscar travels through many different characters: from the kind father or loving gentleman to the murder.

The introductory scene *Holy Motors* begins with the director's portrayal himself (Leos Carax) waking up in his bedroom dressed in pyjamas. After this, he passes through a magic portal leading to the balcony of a cinema theatre. This gives us an indication that the film is a meta-film, or even a minor exposé over

the history of film. The extract [167] from the old black-and-white movie provides a historical reference similar to that provided by Jean-Luc Godard in *Histoire(s) du cinéma (The History of Cinema*, 1988-1998). Indeed, the fact that Leos Carax is clearly influenced by J. L. Godard is well established[168], which also shed some light on the fact that L. Carax has chosen to start his move in conformity with *History of Cinema*, namely by displaying the director himself. Both L. Carax and J.-L. Godard viewed cinema as an industry of masks or lies, or with Godard's words: 'Movies are merchandise. Movies must be burnt… Art is like fire; it's born from what is burnt.'[169]

5.1.1. Sense of lighting

In *Holy Motors*, the light of fire is an element of the mise-en-scène. The lights in *Holy Motors* originate from different sources: the limousine car lights, a lighter etc. The film poster shows a black human silhouette with car light eyes. The title *Holy Motors* could be interpreted as a celebration of the mechanical engine, which propels the modern world. Similarly, the human being becomes a part of the machinery of the modern life. The convergence of humans and machines: human life inside a limousine, a limousine which in the end of the film obtains human characteristics, like a human voice, and starts to communicate with other limousines, and even share experience of existential angst and human problems, like becoming out-dated or unwanted. The limousines even start to flirt with each other, in the garage called *Holy Motors*.

Depending on the way it represented, the lighting of a scene may have not only lighting function but also a symbolic function: as protest, energy, heat etc. Light may create an intimate atmosphere and be a symbol of friendship, for instance when the kidnaped photo model helps Oscar to light a cigarette. Even though Oscar has de facto kidnaped her, the model makes a gesture of kindness. This thoughtfulness contrasts her previous almost robotic manner as a model and sheds a

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[167] 'Leos Carax 'Holy Motors', Entracte 'Let my Baby Ride' Denis Lavant', [online], 2012, [running time: 00.00.04-00.00.06], http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdvBLFI5kIs

[168] From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 'Leos Carax', http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leos_Carax.

[169] Corliss, R, 'The Best DVD of the Year: Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du Cinema*'. *Time Entertainment*, 06 January, 2012, p.1, http://entertainment.time.com/2012/01/06/the-best-dvd-of-the-year-jean-luc-godards-histoires-du-cinema/#ixzz2iOE3kNR4.

different light on her portrayal (see Fig. 10). This successful scene was also used on the backside of the film cover.

In Sharunas Bartas's *The House* people make a big indoor fire. By arranging an auto-da-fe they make a New Year's Eve fire. So, if J.-L. Godard expresses the idea that "movies must be burnt", S. Bartas turns this idea into practice for books. Needless to say, the burned books of this scene open up for many interpretations, especially in the light of the tanks surrounding the house in the very end of the film.

5.1.2. Meaning of music and sound

Like lighting, sound and music constitute powerful tools for expressing the vision of the director and sheds a special light on the woman portrayals for creating a phantasmagorical atmosphere. In S. Bartas's *The House* there are almost no words, just a minor introduction in the beginning and some closing words in the end of the film. In L. Carax's film dialogues are important, but sounds or even silence also play important roles in the dialectics of the atmosphere. From a historical viewpoint, 'spectators [during the silent cinema period] were given an image for a sound: the image of a bell suggests the sound of a bell'[170]. Nowadays film sound usually aims at increasing the impression of reality. Similarly, the sound in L. Carax and S. Bartas films makes the shots more realistic, e.g. in the film *The House* where a picture of birds is accompanied with the sharp sound of flapping wings, making the spectator feel that he/she has the birds in front of him/her[171]. Sometimes the image can serve as a frame for sound. M. Chion describes the imagine shot as an aquarium made of glass, whose borders are visible only if the aquarium is filled with coloured water: 'the visual shot is a container, a container of time and space with definite special and temporal borders, whereas with sound it is just the opposite'[172].

Nowadays, digital sound gives a possibility not only to make perfect recordings of sound, but also reduce totally the background noise and allow pure silence as part of the atmosphere. Silence that hurt. Silence, that creates a tension or Stanislavskian pause, bringing the spectator's attention to important details. Music

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[170] M. Chion, *Film: A Sound Art*, Columbia University Press, 2009, p. 5.
[171] 'The House - A Casa - 1997 film', [online video], 2012, [running time: 00.00.35-00.02.30], http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8-Za_e8Ioc. (accessed 13 October 2013).
[172] M. Chion, *Film: A Sound Art*, Columbia University Press, 2009, p. 227.

on the other hand, can also be used for sharpening the expression, especially when the actors are producing the music themselves; for instance, both mentioned films contain scenes where the actors play accordion. In *Holy Motors*, accordion music is, when the main character Oscar playing, a key ingredient. In one scene, taking place in a church, the director gradually increases the intensity of the music; more specifically, the scene starts with a picture of the score, whereupon Oscar starts to play the most heart braking, intensive music, and finally the other musicians, also accordion-players, joins Oscar, forming a platoon of accordion-players in the sacral atmosphere of the church.[173] Undoubtedly, sound is a powerful means when it comes to creating atmosphere as a part of the film aesthetics. In general, which should be clear from the previous, in both films portrayals are very aesthetical. In *Holy Motors* the contrast between different portrayals, which contains riches and poverty, beauty, and ugliness, life and death are expressed in an aesthetical way by means of contrasts and an aesthetically mature mise-en-scène.

5.2. The beauty, the beast and the dead

In this section I will try to prove the hypothesis that the beautiful portrayal of a woman becomes more sublime in contrastive mise-en-scène. Moreover, I claim that the phantasmagorical atmosphere of the film is closely related to the sublimity of the woman portrayals. As mentioned in the theoretical part, mise-en-scène can be used for creating the meaning of the portrayal. Moreover, it can enhance the shot. Of course, there is the risk of taking focus away from the main character; however, the director can add a sense of story behind the portrayal and a sense of space to the image that take it in a certain direction and give the actor one more layer of depth.

As it was emphasised in the theoretical part of this thesis sublime experiences are subjective. In cinema the dialogue between the director and the spectator plays the main role. An actor, or the woman portrayal, is a messenger in this communication. Mise-en-scène is the cinematic tool of creating a certain atmosphere, which would help to transfer the sublime feelings via actors.

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[173] 'Leos Carax 'Holy Motors', Entracte 'Let my Baby Ride' Denis Lavant', [online video], 2012, [running time: 00.00.07-00.02.30], http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdvBLFI5kIs, (accessed 13 October 2013).

The intimate atmosphere in *The House* is supposed to create a mental connection between the spectator and the universe of the film, making the spectator mirror himself in the cinematographic pictures and sensing the presence of the film characters. The shots are sharp, even visually explosive, and try to get under the spectator's skin. As was mentioned in the theoretical part the sense atmosphere involves all the physical being of the spectator in terms of perception and thought. *Vision* plays an essential role in the internal sensation and external signs. In Bartas's film *The House*, the main character has a very specific vision and often sees surrealistic woman portrayals (see Fig. 11), but there is no sharp distinction between what is real or not.

In both the directors' films, reality is reflected through a dreamlike atmosphere made up by a variety of elements: odd behaviour of characters, specific sounds, an unusual narrative system, unnatural mise-en-scène etc. In *Holy Motors*, the main character Oscar is exhibiting odd behaviour in his different roles. A climax of the character's weirdness is reached when he dresses himself in an eccentric, monstrous outfit and enters the Parisian cemetery *Père Lachaise* from an underground tunnel.[174] "So weird", with the words of the photographer of the photo session, the director creates tension as the madman eats funeral flowers and bites the photographer's assistant's hand; it is hard to guess what his next move will be.

The monstrous character of the male actor helps the feminine beauty flourish. In another role, Oscar kidnaps a beautiful photo model Kay M. (played by Eva Mendes). When he sees her for the first time in the Père Lachaise cemetery, elegantly framed by gothic style gates (see Fig. 12), he approaches her. The presence of the crowd, the photographers, the stylists, the assistants, and the director elevates, through the set of the cemetery, the portrayal of Kay M. and creates a special aura.

In the scene, the face of the female character is shed not only with daylight, but also with the lighting projectors. Her beauty impresses everyone around her, and the sadness and melancholy in her gaze make her even more beautiful. The beautiful woman portrayal presents a puzzling face to the eye of the spectator. Burke writes: '[…] that part of a beautiful woman where she is perhaps the most beautiful, about the neck and breasts; the smoothness; the softness; the easy and insensible

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[174] See video: '*Holy Motors* 'Merde' Clip', 2012, [running timme: 00.00.24-00.01.50], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuNZZDgUqgc&list=PL0zSIZ_Lf7gpRRPKnJqnZbVw7bRJVAP7V.

swell; the variety of the surface, which is never for the smallest space the same;'[175] For the masculine observer the variety of the feminine form is related to the pleasing feeling and the concept of beauty.

However, when Oscar brings the model to an underground drain tunnel I sense that her beauty flourishes even more in the underground, than during the photo session. The contrasting surroundings, created by the mise-en-scène, sharpen her beauty from inner and outside points: her beautiful dressing in the terrible underground, her scraped-away make-up showing her natural beauty, her female melancholy beside violent male. It is almost impossible to not refer to the classical fairy tale *The Beauty and the Beast*. The danger around her (the unpredictable man/monster) sharpens her beauty. Also, the fragility of her beauty makes her even more sublime.

The display of the beautiful in the unexpected surroundings (the underground) reminds of Kantian pepper (mentioned in the theoretical part): placed in an unexpected environment the woman becomes more fragile and in the same way more powerful and sublime. Therefore, I would say that the hypothesis that contrastive mise-en-scène plays an essential role for the creation of sublime woman portrayal could be proven.

Moreover, in a later scene, Oscar transforms the model Kay M. to a character remaining of virgin Maria. In addition, he makes, in order to protect her beauty, a burqa for the fashion model and undresses himself and lies down, naked, beside her. He is filled of desire to have her, but does not touch her. She is displayed as an icon; you can admire her, but beauty is not for use.

The hyper real, mise-en-scène sheds a phantasmagorical light to the woman portrayal, by displaying a well-dressed lady next to a completely naked one. By observing almost transcendental portrayals of the characters in the film the spectator might get the feeling that the inhabitants are some kind a creatures, who are distanced from the material world and from each other and even from themselves. This is exemplified by scene in the end of the film, where the inhabitants are celebrating New Year's Eve. In the scene in question, the inhabitants are wearing, as it is New Year's Eve, animal-looking masks; however, the masks are put on naked bodies, creating a suggestive atmosphere.

I would round by reporting an astonishing finding that I made while

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[175] E. Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry, in P Shaw, *The Sublime*, *(The New Critical Idiom)*, London and New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 60.

writing it and which indeed connects the two directors in a somewhat more direct way than expected: it turned out that they have both been inspired by the same muse or the same woman portrayal, namely the actress Yecaterina Golubeva, who was married to S. Bartas before marrying L. Carax. Y. Golubeva's passed away in Paris in 2011 and her death remains a mystery. She took part in the script writing of *The House* and *Holy Motors* is dedicated to her memory. As known to me, there is no research investigating scientifically her influence on the two works; however, it is convenient to conclude that she must have played crucial roles for the films presented here as earlier works by the two directors. Yecaterina Golubeva does not play in the mentioned films but she was behind. In the *House* she is mentioned as a scriptwriter together with S. Bartas and in *Holy Motors* she appears in the end of the film. In fact only her portrayal appears: the photo of her beautiful face (see Fig. 13). And the thought that she is not alive anymore makes her picture sublime. Her portrayal becomes transcendental, because she does not belong to the material world any longer. The transcendence of the portrayal prepares the spectator to perceive in another way, behind the sensuous, time or space sphere, more deeply. Generally transcendence could be understood as a way of dying. L. Carax placed her photo portrait in his film and thus her portrayal finds a way of living. As the sublime itself embraces the contrastive aspects (in this case even life and death) and sustains a sense of shock, this woman portrayal could be called sublime.

Conclusions

In this thesis it was established that *mise-en-scène* provides some tools for creating sublime feelings of female elevation. In addition, I have been able to identify an intention of artists to use *mise-en-scène* for creating a visual, potential energy, originating from the contrast between the feminine beauty and lightness of the characters and something dark and implicitly masculine of the same, which serves as a bridge to sublime experiences of the spectator.

By taking a theoretical approach to the concept of the sublime and applying it to cinema portrayals I established three hypotheses:

1. The sublime portrayal in itself expresses inner greatness and makes the spectator get a sense of smallness. The spectator senses that there is something inexpressibly great, which slowly flourishes in his eyes, but stays uncanny. In my opinion, academic visual culture has still not explored fully the field of the sublime in relation to phantasmagoria and the world of dreams. Paradoxically, in many cases the purpose of the director is not only to create a dreamlike atmosphere, but also to awake (shock) the spectator from the same. In *Holy Motors* and *The House*, modern reality brings the possibility of criticism. Also, both films are good examples illustrating the Baudrillardian concepts of truth and truthfulness in cinema, where the reality is drastically simulated and even phantasmagorical. Moreover, by taking a Kantian approach to the sublime with the representation of *quantity* one could verify the hypothesis.

2. The example of the Lyotardian family story of the sublime could prove the hypothesis that the sublime is the convergence of the feminine and masculine gender. M. Dietrich's portrayal in the film *Scarlet Empress* is firstly presented beautifully; later, with a portion of masculinity, it becomes sublime. She transforms herself from an innocent girl into a powerful, dangerous woman by taking the control in her hands and to be dominative, i.e., characteristics that are typically referred as masculine.

Interestingly, by using mentioned Dietrich portrayal I can claim, that without the monstrosity dimension portrayal cannot be really sublime, only beautiful. This also corresponds to the theory of the sublime in political terms, were the sublime is *dictatorial* on the contrary to the beautiful described as *social and*

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democratic.[176]

3. The beautiful portrayal of a woman becomes sublime in contrastive (not necessarily beautiful) mise-en-scène. The display of beauty in unexpected surroundings reminds of Kantian pepper, which makes stronger effect when placed in the forest. Here the pepper field and the forest can be viewed as a metaphor for the portrayed object and the mise-en-scène, respectively. For instance, the beautiful characters of M. Dietrich (Scarlet Empress) and E. Mendes become more sublime when placed beside weird men in contrastive mise-en-scène. Also the women in S. Bartas film are placed beside the odd inhabitants in the phantasmagorical atmosphere of the house.

The transition from the beautiful to the sublime is facilitated not only by material mise-en-scènic elements, such as props, set, etc., but also of some psychological like framing (psychological borders), gaze, phantasmagorical atmosphere, which indeed follow after the right mise-en-scène. The woman portrayal frames certain borders, such as: spatial (geographical borders of maps and countries), temporal (gaps between epochs and historical circumstances), cultural (differences between languages, general customs, and traditions), or psychological (mismatches between intentions and expectations on the human level) senses. In the film *Mother India* the beautiful woman becomes sublime through the framing of her moral and national values. She is exemplified with a masculine power, as a strong hero and can undoubtly be viewed as a female Messiah who sacrifices herself for a higher purpose. Moreover, her iconic portrayal, turned into an ideal, should inspire, muse, encourage, etc. In the mentioned film the convergence of contrasts, such as strength and fragility, beauty and harshness has a tendency to extend the beautiful woman portrayal to the sublime. There are sublime characteristics, such as a woman's masculine strength in order to reach her goals and feminine kindness with the people around.

The sublime feeling could be also transferred by the Lacanian gaze, i.e. when the actor turns his gaze directly to the spectator. This gaze is usually sharp, even painful, profound and unexpected. The classical example is Monika's gaze in the mentioned Ingmar Bergman film *Summer with Monika* (*Sommaren med Monika*, 1953). The film *Summer with Monika* is characterized by an intimate interplay between the actor and the camera. As a result we obtain characteristic scene offering

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[176] P. Shaw, *The Sublime (The New Critical Idiom)*, Routledge, London and New York, 2006. p. 9.

a very strong sense of re-location of the gaze. The psychodynamic model associated with Lacanian gaze provides a surprisingly powerful tool in terms of sublime, where one is more powerful than another.

Moreover, after the film content analysis I found that the phantasmagorical atmosphere could function as an efficient ingredient of a sublime woman portrayal. The films by L. Carax and S. Bartas share a common poetical, visual style characterized by an atmosphere pervaded by nostalgia, loss of identity, and the picture of the modern human as an actor in a constantly varying world, where all values are in dissolution. Just like Oscar, an inhabitant of this world has to master acting and the transformation into different portrayals with all related issues, such that dressing, make-up, and, most importantly, the adaptation of the mind. Some scenes indeed remind of small, improvised etudes performed by, e.g., theatre students at an exam. In the light of the previous, it is thus a natural consequence that the film is a film about film, i.e. a meta-film, and that the mise-en-scène is adjusted accordingly. The film uses cinema to mirror the lie (simulation) in today's society and sends a political message to spectator to throw away the veil of Maya and to wake up from the illusion of the modern consumer culture. The dreaming atmosphere in the film relates to this awakening process. Also in Bartas's film the atmosphere is characterized by nostalgia, loss, and trauma, but in this case the main character is walking through an otherworldly expanse of rubble of scattered, fragmentary memories and past emotions, a surrealistic transformation of a world which once was real. On the other hand, the end scenes, where the books are burning and unidentified troops are surrounding the house in the light of dawn, call, just like in the film of L. Carax, for an abrupt awakening form the hypnotising, dreamlike atmosphere.

After the analysis of the sublime women portrayals in theory and practice I made some philosophical conclusions:

Sublime woman portrayals have intensity. Sublimity is an action. Mona Lisa's smile is sublime because it has just started; it is happening; it is acting. Sublime portrayals turn transcendence into liveliness, pain into aesthetical pleasure, reality into phantasmagoria or the other way around. Thus, it has a tendency to circulate, to simulate a reality that makes the spectator wonder. This feeling brings him closer to the sublime. Alternatively, the simulation brings fear, which also may bring the spectator closer to the sublime. In order to transform a beautiful portrayal

into a sublime one, the real should be simulated. Sublime portrayals contain transcendent ideals of phantasy.

In the thesis, I found some essential elements that make woman portrayals sublime. Sublime experience contains subjectivity and it should be left a space for spectator's projection. The concept of the sublime belongs to the sphere of the feeling of affection, or rather contradictory feelings and conceptions. Hence, the sublime could be described by oxymoron, such as the pairs of opposition: beauty-monstrous, happiness-melancholia, etc. The sublime dimension is where opposite feelings meet in one place and create potential energy; transcendence and phantasmagoria serve as catalysts for this process.

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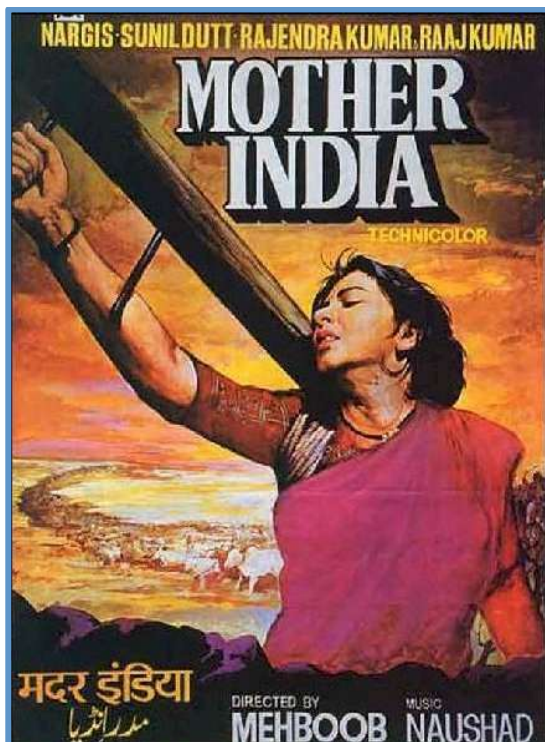CORLISS, R., 'The Best DVD of the Year: Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du Cinema*'. *Time Entertainment*, 06 January 2012, <http://entertainment.time.com/2012/01/06/the-best-dvd-of-the-year-jean-luc-godards-histoires-du-cinema/#ixzz2iOE3kNR4>, (accessed 7 January 2014).

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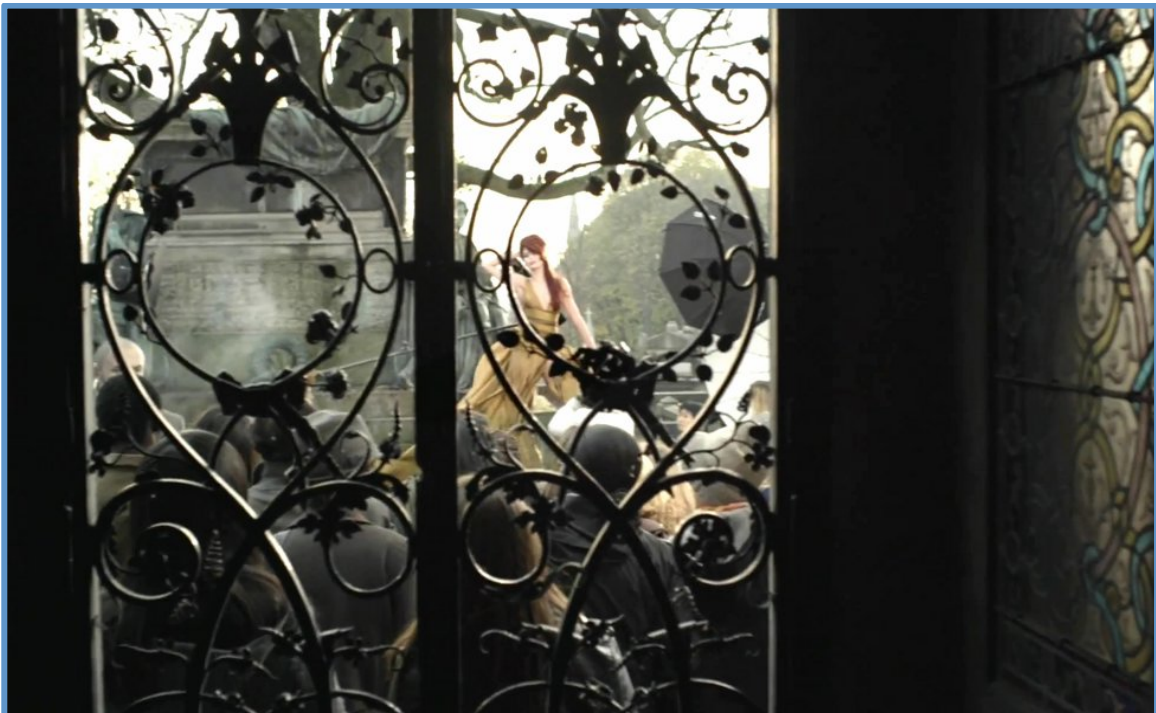
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