

GONE GIRL, IN THE MEANDERS OF A TWISTED GAME:
representation of a female murderer

Pauline LALLE

Sous la direction de
Monsieur Zachary BAQUÉ et Madame Corinne MAURY
Jury : Monsieur David ROCHE

Mémoire présenté en vue de la validation de la première année de
Master Recherche Langues, Littérature et Civilisations Etrangères
Spécialité Etudes Anglophones
Mention Etudes Filmiques

Juillet 2016

Université Toulouse Jean-Jaurès
U.F.R. Langues, Littératures, Civilisations Etrangères

GONE GIRL, IN THE MEANDERS OF A TWISTED GAME:
representation of a female murderer

Pauline LALLE

Directeur de recherche: Mr Zachary BAQUÉ
Tutrice: Mme Corinne MAURY
Jury : Mr David ROCHE

Mémoire présenté en vue de la validation de la première année de
Master Recherche Langues, Littérature et Civilisations Etrangères
Spécialité Etudes Anglophones
Mention Etudes Filmiques

Juillet 2016

Acknowledgments

I would like first to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Mr Zachary Baqué, for his insightful advice, valuable comments and continuous support throughout the year. His guidance, patience, understanding and flexibility made this thesis possible and an unforgettable experience for me.

I would also like to thank Mrs Corinne Maury as a second reader of this work. Her passionate participation, her immense knowledge and her stimulating interest made this year productive and gratifying.

A special thanks to my parents and family, for their belief in me in moments of doubts and their generous support – both spiritually and materially.

Finally, I must express my very profound gratitude to my friends and loved ones, Alicia, Caroline, Emma, Lotus, Thomas and Raphaël, for providing me moral support, uncompromising understanding, and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of researching and writing this thesis. This accomplishment would not have been possible without their love and friendship. Thank you.

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
A character between legacy, peculiarity and power: Amy Dunne, a cinematographic “hapax”?	10
<i>A heterogeneous legacy</i>	10
Two founding figures.....	10
The influence of the <i>femme fatale</i>	11
The influence of the castrating woman	14
<i>When Amy D. meets the Other</i>	17
A divided personnality	17
A criticism of society and especially of the “cool girl”	21
The monstrous figure	25
<i>An almighty figure?</i>	29
The value of voice-over	30
The role of the close-ups	35
Amy's supra-consciousness	36
Dialectics of representation in Gone Girl: the body and the gaze	42
<i>Instrumentalization of the female body</i>	42
The female body as a weapon	42
From erotic object to erotic subject	47
Presence, absence and distance of the body.....	48
<i>The role of media in the dialectics of representation in Gone Girl</i>	54
A surveillance regime	51
A narrative within the narrative	54
<i>Challenging the gaze of the camera</i>	55
The active looking	55
Amy and the figure of the woman wearing glasses	58
A narrative structure resting on a trilateral base: power, knowledge, and manipulation	62
<i>A manipulative narrative</i>	62
The motif of imprisonment	62
Omnipresence of games	67
The lying image	68

<i>The position of the spectator in this trilateral formation:</i>	
<i>between ignorance and power</i>	71
Informations and revelations	71
Power and ignorance of the spectator	72
<i>“All the world's a stage...”: the value of staging in Gone Girl</i>	75
A manipulative narrative	75
Performances	77
Conclusion	82
Appendice	85
<i>The structure of Gone Girl</i>	85
Works Cited	90
<i>Audio-visual resources</i>	90
<i>Bibliography</i>	92

Introduction

“When I think of my wife, I picture cracking her skull, unspooling her brain” the narrator says (in fact Nick) in the first image of the film as an unknown woman (in fact Amy) looks at him and presses her head against his stomach in an insidious way. This moment of couple intimacy tinged of an incommensurable atmosphere is followed by a succession of bathed in dim light images of loneliness, emptiness, bleakness, and these two elements presage of an unusual love story where something is vitiated from the very beginning. The title in itself refers to an initial absence, to an original lack that seems to be a bad omen.

Gone Girl is the latest movie directed by David Fincher. Adapted from Gillian Flynn's book¹ and released in 2014, this movie fits in line with Fincher's preceding movies in terms of characters, aesthetics, major themes or narrative construction. Indeed, David Fincher's filmography displays a recurrence of certain motifs. His filmography indicates that David Fincher seems to prefer stories with twisted and disconcerted characters, where the theme of mental and/or physical imprisonment is a key component of dark aesthetics, and where the motif of game is embedded in the narrative structure. Fincher's typical character is a character who struggles and the omnipresent notion of Evil is not a stranger to this struggle. Fincher's movies are built on his fascinations: he is fascinated by the concept of Evil but his approach is almost scientific; he is always trying to capture, identify, classify and x-ray this concept through its embodiment in sick minds and twisted characters.² His movies are driven by the exploration of perversity because David Fincher works on the assumption that Evil is hidden everywhere: in a labyrinthine city in *Seven* (1995, New line Camera), in a worldwide chaos in *Fight Club* (1999, 20th Century fox), deep inside each of us in *The Game* (1997, PolyGram Fimed Entertainment)³ or in the intimacy of a couple in *Gone Girl* (2014, 20th Century Fox). Besides, this fascination for Evil cohabits with a tremendous love for the principle of game(s): challenges, bets, treasure quest (*Gone Girl*), riddles, crypted messages (*Zodiac*, 2007, Warner Bros), hide and seek (*Seven*), rules to follow (*Fight Club*), the title itself of the film “*The Game*”. The combination of the analysis of Evil and the recourse to games, which are both in a sense a process of investigation, allows David Fincher to explore ideas of imprisonment, redemption, reality being contaminated by fiction, illusion and paranoia, etc...

Gone Girl gathers some of these recurrent motifs and topics but drifts away from the rest of Fincher's filmography because it is the first time that Evil is embodied by a female character. In his

1 Gillian FLYNN, *Gone Girl*, Crown Publishers, 2012

2 Dominique Legrand, David Fincher, explorateur de nos angoisses, Editions du Cerf, 2009, p.12.

3 *Ibid.*

previous movies, male characters embodied the notion of Evil, such as the serial killer John Doe (Kevin Spacey) in *Seven* or Taylor Durden (Edward Norton/Brad Pitt) in *Fight Club* and female characters were above all strong and struggling women like Ellen Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) in *Alien 3* (1992, 20th Century Fox) or Meg Altman (Jodie Foster) in *Panic Room* (2002, Columbia Pictures).

Gone Girl tells the story of a young and rich couple Nick (Ben Affleck) and Amy Dunne (Rosasumd Pike). They meet in New York City but move to North Carthage, Missouri when Nick's mother become sick. To others, they seem to be a loving and happy couple but Amy suddenly disappears in mysterious circumstances and everything seems to accuse Nick of murdering her. In fact, Amy wants to take revenge on her adulterous husband so she faks her own death and sets up a giant treasure hunt where evidences are spread and collected by Nick and the police to make him being prosecuted and sentenced to death for her murder. But Amy goes back home when her original plan does not go well and she have to kill her ex-lover Desi Collings.

Broadly speaking, this idea of original lack is the starting point of this essay: a quick overview of cinematographic productions and especially of American cinema, since the United States has a substantial and international influence in today's cinema, shows that violence and murders as symbols of power and control are mainly and almost invariably men's prerogative. But *Gone Girl* comes as a counterpoint to this lack of female murderer representation and in a very striking and riveting way. Indeed, numerous movies are about male murderers and there is a large range of male murderers figures: men kill for different reasons and their representation as murderers always goes hand in hand with a deep, thorough, and meaningful psychological background. Therefore, in movies of every genre such as war movies, spy movies, action movies, men kill because they are psychopaths like in *Silence of the Lambs* (1991, Orion Pictures) or it is their duty or even their job like in the *James Bond* serie or *Collateral* (2004, Paramount Pictures), or they are positively presented as characters consumed with guilt *American Sniper* (2015, Warner Bros).

But the figure of female murderers remains an uncanny occurrence in movies; this particular type of character is quite absent, whereas literary figures of murderous women are common and they can even be seen as a literary *topos* that found its way through the ages: from myths with Medea, Judith or Philomela to more contemporary novels such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1998, 10/18) or Alice Munro's *Child's Play* (2007, Harper's Magazine). Yet, in cinema and more precisely in our case, American cinema, this creature of paper did not take the plunge to become a filmic creature: characters of female murderers are under-represented; it seems to be a rare or a less frequently occurring phenomenon in comparison with characters of male murderers.

In the light of this observation, it becomes obvious that the character of the female murderer is a problematic one because its rareness implies uniqueness, a singularity and even an idiosyncrasy worth studying.

Indeed, when a female murderer appears on the screen, she usually falls into a schematic, binary and dual representation. The first and most common representation happens when she is shown as an object of desire for the male gaze⁴, which is an hypothesis that falls within the theoretical approach explaining that women on screens are meant to be looked at, to be seen, that they are conscientiously sexualized or eroticized to please the scopic drive of the spectator. But at the same time, her lack of penis implies threat of castration and so she takes on a threatening image for the audience⁵. For example, in Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* (2003; 2004, Miramax), an advanced aesthetization of the woman who kills takes place⁶: it is exactly because she performs violence and murders in skin-tight bodysuits, re-enacts clichés of female quarrel, the “cat-fight” in which jealousy, pettiness and drama are the main ingredients or dresses as sexual fantasies (the nurse, the Japanese schoolgirl, the geisha, etc..) that she is undergoing an advanced aesthetization influenced by the male gaze; she becomes an object of desire. But the character of female murderer can also be presented as a repulsive and scary figure like in *Monster* (2003, Newmarket Films) or at the very end of *Sunset Boulevard* (1951, Paramount Pictures). Thus, fascination and repulsion are the two sides of the coin in the filmic representation of female murderers.

There is a kind of intrinsic duality that leads to ambiguity when the figure of the female murderer is evoked: she is at the same time powerful and vulnerable, a victim and a persecutor, a potential threat and a reassuring figure. Such character is marked by the idea of inevitability: when a woman kills, the others, intradiegetic characters and members of the audience, judge her. There is always a judgemental dimension when women are the center of the attention because “women are spectacles in their everyday lives”⁷; it occurs in films as well as in the modern society where weight, height, beauty, femininity, maternal instinct, personal ambition, sexuality are criterias and tools to judge and criticize women. This external judgement, which eventually ends up being internalized, incites to seek the murderous woman some reasons to clear her, to excuse her or, on the contrary, to criticize her, blame her, or condemn her. Thus, depending on the bias taken, she can

4 Laura MULVEY, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, Oxford University Press, 1999, see p. 837

5 *Idem*. See p.840

6 By “advanced aesthetization”, I refer to a process that female characters in films can undergo to make them correspond to a fantasy or to an idealness of beauty. This aesthetization is associated to visual objectification. In *Kill Bill*'s revenge story, a woman called “The Bride” wants to take revenge on her former team of assassins but despite having an active role and seizing the masculine power, she is still objectified through close shots on her body.

7 Judith MAYNES in « Women and Film: A Discussion of Feminist Aesthetics », *New German Critique* No. 13, 1978, pp. 82-107.

be seen as a victim or a tormentor. She also can be seen as a torturer because when a woman kills, she goes against the norm, against the social order and social expectations such as being sweet, pleasant, good-looking, feminine, thoughtful, moderate, supportive of her man or getting married, becoming a mother⁸. In that way, by stepping out of the traditional expectations and social order, she becomes powerful but also vulnerable because she cannot rely upon the norm anymore, the established order; she is outside the framework of society and it can be an uncomfortable position.

The figure of the female murderer is an odd figure, especially in the cinema where the male gaze most of the time prevails⁹. She is a problematic figure because she has a strong subversive potential; this specific representation can deconstruct and debunk some clichés because the figure of the female murderer goes against the usual characterization of women, moulded by clichés, prejudices and stereotypes: the image of the “Angel in the house”¹⁰, the image of the mother, the image of the devoted spouse for example. Besides, through the representation of the female murderer in cinema, there is a sort of role reversal; there is a re-appropriation of codes and values: the woman seizes control, she becomes the dominant figure and she imposes on the others her will, her decisions. Women are not giving life anymore when the reproductive role was their only power and function in society and through the act of murder they are breaking into the field of warfare, formerly men's prerogative.

Amy Dunne embodies the modern occidental ideal that women must reach in order to fit and many of the stereotypes assigned to women¹¹: she is a blonde, white, young, slim, educated and pretty woman; she is an active housewife and seems to stay in the background for the benefit of her husband Nick. She is torn apart between the fictional and perfect character “Amazing Amy” invented by her parents and based on her childhood, and her actual life as Amy Dunne. And yet, *Gone Girl* depicts a non standard female character and illustrates all of the issues previously mentioned : Amy Dunne is a female murderer who steps out of the norm in many ways, crystallises the fascination/repulsion feelings and confiscates the power. The movie itself plays with the different notions of gaze, couple, gender, visual representation, stereotypes, portrayal of the female body and power, which is why a feminist analysis of the movie with a sociological dimension (of this movie) fits perfectly because it allows to explore the link between cinema and society, between representation and perception.

What makes a feminist approach for the study of this movie even more relevant is the fact

8 See Françoise HÉRITIER, *Masculin, Féminin. La pensée de la différence*. Editions O. Jacob, 1996, p.224

9 Laura MULVEY, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, Oxford University Press, 1999, see p. 837.

10 See Coventry PATMORE's poem, *The Angel In the House*, 1858

11 See the documentary *Miss Representation* directed by Jennifer Siebel Newsom in 2011 for her analysis of the stereotypes controlling and pressuring women in modern western society.

that when it was released, it was at the same time accused of misandry and misogyny¹². *Gone Girl* was both seen as misandrist because of the character of Nick Dunne presented as a weak, lazy, violent, adulterous and selfish husband, and misogynist because of the cold-hearted, psychopath, perverse, and murderous Amy Dunne. And these types of processes of thought and perception are studied by feminism and feminist theory study. “Representation” is a key-word in feminist film theory because it emphasizes the fact that our ways of understanding, thinking, or tackling a piece of visual art such as a movie or even a painting, are also shaped by pre-existing schemes, influenced by some external systems, such as society, patriarchy, fashion trends, political beliefs. The word itself suggests that a representation is not a pure perception of reality, it is rather a perception through a sort of filter; it is not a presentation, it is a “re-presentation”. A feminist approach of the movie under study is relevant because that kind of approach and theoretical background tries to analyze and provide a new reading grid in order to question presuppositions that can undermine our perceptions.

Besides, it is interesting because the feminist movement was one of the first to claim “The personal is political”¹³ meaning that what belongs to the private sphere is in fact influenced by the public sphere and that some individual struggles or experiences have to be exposed in the public arena in order to be handled because in fact it is a collective issue. In *Gone Girl*, this statement is a little bit embezzled: Amy and Nick's private life and personal sphere become a subject for the *polis*. Their private life is analyzed, scanned, husked by the public sphere but putting their private and individual life on display turns the public space into an arena where questions of power are brought to a new level.

Moreover, in terms of gaze, stereotypes, representation and perception of the female body, violence and power (which are main subjects of study and discussion in the feminist movement and theory), *Gone Girl* adopts an interesting stand in which different levels of interpretation can intervene and the fact that it was accused of two antagonistic stands suggests that this movie is problematic, ambiguous, and open to interpretation.

12 About the various critics addressed to *Gone Girl*, see :

SANER Emine, “The *Gone Girl* backlash : what women don't want”, *theguardian.com*, The Guardian, October 7th 2014

DOCKTERMAN Eliana, “Is *Gone Girl* Feminist or Misogynist?”, *time.com*, TIME, October 6th 2014

DOBBINS Amanda, “Yes, *Gone Girl* Has a Woman Problem”, *vulture.com*, Vulture, October 3rd 2014

LEPRON Louis, “*Gone Girl*, un film anti-féministe, vraiment?”, *konbini.com*, Konbini, 2014

ZAOUI Zacharie, “Fincher, *Gone Girl* et la misogynie”, *aecfrance.com*, AEC France, February 17th 2016

13 The slogan “The personal is political” became popular in the United States during the late 1960s. It is connected to the beginning of the second wave feminism that emphasized the political dimension of their questions and struggles. This second wave showed that personal experiences and the private life are collective issues. See Alice Echols. *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975*, University of Minnesota Press, 1989 for more elements on the history of second wave feminism and especially on the emergence of the slogan “The personal is political”, which is at first the title of an essay by Carol Hanisch.

Feminist film theory is quite recent and even if it is common and popular in the United States and United Kingdom to use feminist theory to analyze a movie, in France, gender and cultural studies have just start to be seen as proper academic fields and do not have the same impact in the world of research as methods and schools of thought like semiotics, philosophy, or structuralism.

David Fincher is also a recent, contemporary director : he started as a movie director with *Alien 3* just 24 years ago. Even if he has been prolific, his movies have not been studied a lot; academic papers are not so common on David Fincher¹⁴. Yet, David Fincher's movies compose a whole universe and are driven by a criticism of nowadays society and a constant questioning of the meaning and embodiment of Evil.

Since *Gone Girl* is a very contemporary film, besides the critics, this film has not been a subject of academic study, which can make academic researches on *Gone Girl* more laborious and complicated. This essay rests upon many theoretical works on cinema, on the notion of gaze, on the place of women in movies that helped for the analysis of *Gone Girl*. Besides, Fincher is influenced by the genre of the *film noir* so many essays provided interesting elements and tools for the analysis.

This analysis¹⁵ of *Gone Girl* is based on the idea that movies are above all cultural productions and constructions, and thus they are polysemous and ambivalent. Noel Burch and Genevieve Sellier explain that movies are not necessarily a reflection of the society but they can definitely be a part of the elaboration of gender norms and stereotypes for example¹⁶, and this study will attempt to show that *Gone Girl* can be analyzed through the prism of gender studies with the power struggle between men and women or the use and transgression of reductive stereotypes. This essay will not insist much on the debate that took place on the question of whether *Gone Girl* is a misogynist movie or not but it is a starting point to ask questions: Is *Gone Girl* a feminist movie from Hollywood that criticizes sexism and violence against women or is it a movie that uses and stages the masculine fantasy of the emasculating and vengeful woman? Why all these opposed views? Is Amy Dunne a strong and independent woman or is she just another cliché? How does the

14 Nevertheless, a few academic papers or essays on David Fincher's movies have been published in the past years and deserve attention:

CRAINE James and AITKEN Stuart C., "Street Fighting: Placing the Crisis of masculinity in David Fincher's *Fight Club*", in *GeoJournal*, volume 59, pp.289-296, 2004

LEGRAND Dominique, *David Fincher, explorateur de nos angoisses*, Le Cerf, 2009

SCHREIBER Michele, "Tiny Life: Technology and Masculinity in the Films of David Fincher", in *Journal of Video and Film*, 2016.

YEO Dennis, *Gothic Paranoia in David Fincher's Se7en, The Game and Fight Club*, 2014

15 For the sake of a more unclouded analysis, I choose to divide the movie in two parts corresponding to two major dynamics of the plot. See the appendice at the end to more precisions on this division.

16 Noel BURCH and Genevieve SELLIER, in *Le cinéma au prisme des rapports de sexe*, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2009, p.9-10.

storytelling influence our perception of the characters? To what extent is Amy a cathartic character? These are relevant questions but above all, *Gone Girl* stages of power-based relations and struggle for power. Amy Dunne, when she designs her tricky plan to punish her husband, takes back the power and imposes her will. In this way, she withdraws from the expectations that the society, the institution of marriage, her parents, her husband can have and attempts to find her own way. Obviously, the character of Amy Dunne suffers from serious mental disorder but saying that she is crazy is reductive because it impedes to see the many layers hidden behind this strong-willed, powerful, and fierce character. Moreover, this sort of accusation of madness is not insignificant: hysteria is most of the time implied or evoked when a woman is called crazy, when madness is characterizing a female figure. This accusation is directly connected and based on her gender: hysteria comes from the Greek “hystera” that means “matrix, uterus”¹⁷. And so it is reductive because a concrete psychology is denied to the female character who is reduced to a pejorative and medical term.

This essay will attempt to avoid any such reduction while studying the character of Amy Dunne and will try to show the many levels of interpretations of this movie by mainly focusing on the subversive and cathartic representation of the female murderer and highlighting the issues of power, representation and gaze that lie behind this odd and impressive character.

17 Thérèse LEMPERIERE, “**HYSTERIE**”, *Encyclopædia Universalis*

I/ A character between legacy, peculiarity and power: Amy Dunne, a cinematographic “hapax”?

A heterogeneous legacy

Facing the inequality in the representation of male killers and female killers in cinema, we could think that movies are only conforming to the factual reality: men kill more than women. In this way it would explain the under-representation, and even mis-representation, of female killer in movies : cinema, in a genuine real-life perspective, would attempt to be faithful to the facts and so would provide more models and characters of male murderers than female ones. Kurstin Finch has already pointed out this idea in her thesis¹⁸ but she refuses to rely on this sole observation and stresses that the figure of the female murderer has always exercised a sort of fascination¹⁹. The fictitious character of Amy Dunne provokes this fascination. The first part of this essay will start by re-contextualizing this figure in a larger context to show the potential influence of a tradition and legacy in her construction. Then it will show that even if Amy Dunne belongs to a tradition in terms of character of female murderer, she is very unique because the way her character is built appropriate ancient, literary, filmic and even psychoanalytic references and at the same time diverts from this legacy, leading her to be seen as a kind of “cinematographic hapax”, that is a unique or at least very rare cinematographic phenomenon.

The character of Amy Dunne belongs to a long tradition of female killers or more broadly of female criminals. Two founding models have shaped the representation of the female murderer: the ancient figure of Lilith and the mythological Medea. While Lilith (of whom the exact origins remain uncertain²⁰) became more of a symbol, Medea became an important literary reference.

18 Kurstin FINCH, *When She Was Bad: Framing Female Killers in Contemporary Film*, Oregon State University, 1999: “[...] fewer than 15% of arrestees for homicide in the U. S. are females (Goetting 1995) and fewer than 2% of the 3,400 people on death row are women (McGraw 1998). In other words, most "real life" killers are men.” p.1

19 Kurstin FINCH, *Ibidem*: “Female killers have fascinated Western society for as long as women have been killing. Women have been killing, and have been punished for killing, as far back as we have records. Records for infanticide (a traditionally female crime) can be found as long ago as the Black Plague (Dobash et al 1995). Jones (1994) notes that old English law contains rules for prosecuting the woman who kills her husband or lord. Jones (1980) and Mann (1996) review crumbling Puritan legal texts that graphically and disapprovingly describe women accused of killing their 2 babies (usually conceived out of wedlock).”

20 The name Lilith is not a substantiated character in the Bible but she appears a few times in the Talmud but she is thoroughly described in the Jewish rabbinic tradition where she is introduced as a beautiful redhead who used to be Adam's first wife. She became the symbol of the night and a dangerous figure because she refused to submit to Adam who finally preferred Eve. She has the reputation of attacking men and killing babies.

See Marc-Alain DESCAMPS, « Lilith ou la permanence d'un mythe. », *Le mythe au XXIème siècle*, 2015, for more precisions on the history and construction of this figure.

The influence of these two mythological female figures in the character of Amy Dunne is palpable in the reasons that led to the crime: Lilith is driven by her jealousy for Eve while Medea cannot stand Jason's betrayal. In *Gone Girl*, the plot rests upon these two emotions of jealousy and desire for revenge, that push Amy to take action against Nick. When Amy re-appears in the film (cf. Photogram 1), a connection between Medea and Amy can be made: they are both disappointed with their lovers, want to take revenge on them and when they do, they run away. In this scene, a medium close shot of Amy in her car involves the spectator and puts him in a position of witness and front-seat passenger as she is describing her husband as a “lazy, lying, cheating, oblivious husband” and the red stain of blood on her arm recalls the criminal dimension of her getaway. Just like Medea, Amy lists all the things Nick took from her: “my pride and my dignity, and my hopes and my money”. It can be noticed that Amy is heading East as if she embraced the opposite of the American mantra “Go West!”: this particular significant movement symbolizes that the fact that she is steering against the norm, that she adopts a rebellious attitude.



(Photogram n°1, 01:06:13)

Just like Medea jettisoned bits of her brother's body to slow down people running after her, Amy throws by the window the crime weapons: her pens.

Besides, she wants to take revenge on Nick because he betrayed her just like Jason did with Medea but she also wants to annihilate her improved double, Amazing Amy, of whom she is jealous, just like Lilith is jealous of Eve who is the female version that Adam chose to live with him in Heaven. Presented at first as a modern Eve, Amy Dunne is in fact a vengeful Lilith.

So, connections can be made between Amy and the figures of Medea and Lilith, yet, in this re-contextualization of Amy's position in the panorama of female killer characters and especially within the scope of cinema, the *femme fatale* is even more of a crucial influence. The *femme fatale* is a stereotype that comes from the *film noir* and deeply marked the representation of women in movies. Jacques Siclier explains that American cinema, unlike British or French cinemas, managed to create great and influential cinematographic myths such as the character of the gangster but also

the myth of the Woman. This myth went together with a vision of love deeply rooted in the collective mentality of that time: during the silent era, women were seen and shown as goddesses but also as useful and necessary tools for men's success and accomplishment in life and in order to let this happen, they had to be beautiful, desirable and in love with the male character²¹. But with the rise in popularity of the *film noir*, a reversal of situation happen: this position as a necessary element to men's success gave power and influence to female characters, consequently they were seen as something powerful but this female position of power was one of the biggest fears of misogynist Hollywood of that time. The key-symptom of this reversal is the shift from the goddess to the vamp or *femme fatale*. Women from *films noirs* remind more of Lilith than Eve. Kurstin Finch defines the *femme fatale* as:

The femme fatale, or fatal woman, has been an instrumental fixture in film for the past few decades. The femme fatale is any attractive woman who uses her looks (and occasionally wealth and power) to seduce men and lead them to downfall- poverty, social ostracism, or death (Birch 1994; Doane 1991; Dyer 1993; Fischer 1989; Holmlund 1994; Maxfield 1996).²²

According to Jacques Siclier, *Gilda* (1946, Columbia Pictures) and *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947, Columbia Pictures) are prime examples of the impact and the construction of the femme fatale: Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel* initiates the character of the *femme fatale* marked by fatality and curse, granted with a real power of destruction. In this movie, she is the impure force with a sensual power who dominates the relations between men and women. In *The Lady from Shanghai*, Orson Welles makes the *femme fatale* appear from the ashes of the ideal woman. Elsa Bannister is not the perfect, lost and romantic wife, she is in fact the blonde perverse heroine.

The image of the *femme fatale* greatly impacted on the character of Amy. But does Amy Dunne still fit into this representation of women in the American *films noirs* or does she move away from it? In a sense, Amy Dunne embodies the shift from the Ideal woman to the *femme fatale* in *Gone Girl*: she corresponds to the myth of the woman seen as a goddess (in *films noirs*) and a valuable asset for men's accomplishment but slowly her real face is disclosed to the public and the spectators understand that she is more a Lilith than an Eve, more a *femme fatale* than an utterly pure goddess. She is the woman men do not and cannot submit. When she re-appears, she is shown like someone in control and in opposition to the traditional image of Eve. She claims that “[she] forged the man of [her] dreams” (01:11:42) and the extreme close-up on the empty fridge with the bottle of expired milk (cf. Photogram 2) becomes a metaphor for Nick and Amy's marriage and the rupture with the traditional vision of the couple, of the woman and of marriage.

21 Jacques SICLIER, *Le mythe de la femme dans le cinéma américain*, Editions du Cerf, 1956 p.10

22 Kurstin FINCH in *When She Was Bad: Framing Female Killers in Contemporary Film*, thesis, 1999, p.62



(Photogram n°2, 1:12:03)

Moreover, women from the *films noirs* are seen as something mysterious and close to the notion of “terra incognita” because they are not explicit or clear about their limits and dangers and Amy truly is a “terra incognita” at the beginning of the movie, that is to say a sort of mystery, a part of the film that remains inaccessible for the audience and the intradiegetic characters (at least, in the first part of the film). Besides, the character of Amy shares with the *femme fatale* many common features: she is a compelling force that manipulates Nick, the media and the police, she uses her sexuality or her feminine attributes to get what she wants, she is not really what she seems to be, “she harbors a threat which is not entirely predictable or manageable”²³. Besides, her hair color carries meaning in the tradition of the *film noir*. Indeed, since the first pictorial representations of Eve, the blonde hair color refers to purity and innocence in popular imagination and the *film noir* plays with this image. The *femme fatale* comes shatter it, leaving the intradiegetic male characters and the spectators stunned. As Michel Cieutat pointed out : “La blondeur peut donc être traîtresse et le coup en est d’autant plus dur pour les Américains qui ont toujours été fascinés par les effets de soleil auroral et de lumière divine.”²⁴. In *Gone Girl*, it is even more significant because Amy, her improved fictional double in particular, is the embodiment of the “America's Sweetheart”²⁵, a young and good woman who attracts the affection of the country and who is perceived as a model. Moreover, the *femme fatale* is often juxtaposed with a well-respected and respectable woman: “a virtuous, loyal wife, an innocent daughter, a passive, asexual friend, or a kind, selfless mother”²⁶ and Amazing Amy steps into that role. At first, Amy seems to fit in this cliché of the beautiful and desirable wife who almost has the statute of an accessory for the success of her male partner. In the scene of the couple moving in Missouri, she explains that she feels “like something he loaded by mistake, something to be jettisoned if necessary”, she describes herself at this moment as a

23 Mary Ann DOANE in *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, 1991 , p.1

24 Michel CIEUTAT in *Les Grands thèmes du cinéma américain, Tome 2 : Ambivalence et croyances*, Editions du Cerf, 1991, pp. 75-76.

25 In the movie, Amy is associated to this image, when Nick's lawyer and Nick discuss of their strategy to “Make them stop seeing her as America's sweetheart”.

26 Kurstin FINCH in *When She Was Bad: Framing Female Killers in Contemporary Film*, thesis, 1999, p.62

disposable object with a clear purpose (to be the perfect wife). Slowly she drifts away from this image to its contrary, she gets closer to the image of the *femme fatale* instead, yet, a distance remains with this cinematographic archetype. For example, Amy is not marked by the ideas of fatality and curse and she has a real and genuine power of destruction that she does not use for money: destruction of Nick's life by forcing him to stay with her for their unborn child, Nick's public image by revealing all of his secrets, her marriage with Nick, Desi's life by killing him during sexual intercourse, her ex-boyfriend's reputation by pressing charges against him for rape... Amy does not use a gun to kill; she steps away from the cliché of the *femme fatale* who is sexier and even more attractive when she adopts an aggressive pose with a gun. But theoreticians have different views on such a figure : for some, the image of *the femme fatale* is reductive because she carries a negative dimension and she is often reduced to the status of a men's object but some consider that in a way, the *femme fatale* in the films noirs enable the emancipation of women because they are no longer stuck to the role of the "trophy wife"²⁷.

Amy Dunne is related in some ways to a literary and cinematographic tradition from which she distances herself at some points. The character of the *femme fatale* is tightly connected to the psychoanalytical concepts of the castrating woman, and this approach can help to understand the character of Amy and emphasizes the questions of power related to her and in a more general way, to the female murderers.

First of all, the Freudian idea of "castration anxiety" plays an important role in the mechanisms involved in the understanding of the female murderer figure. Freud explains that the castration anxiety, associated with Oedipus Complex, shaped the masculine psyche: based on an original fantasy, the castration anxiety occurs when the little boy fears for his penis because he saw the possibility to not have one when he noticed that his mother was missing one. The castration anxiety does not manifest itself in the same way for girls: the castration anxiety for them is not about something that they can lose, that someone might or could take away from them or remove, the problem is the fact that it has already been taken away and there is nothing to be done.

The Freudian position²⁸ claims that the woman horrifies because she is castrated and has the capacity to become castrating but a shift occurs with Lacan's reflection²⁹. Lacan re-examines the process described by Freud and replaces the castrated woman with the castrating woman and insists on the symbolic status of the woman as the signifier of a lack. Indeed, if the woman is seen as a

27 Fanny PIRA, *Les femmes criminelles dans le film noir américain de 1940 à 1960*, thesis, Université Sciences Humaines et Arts de Poitiers, 2007

28 Claude LE GUEN, « Complexe d'Œdipe et complexe de castration », *Dictionnaire freudien*, Presses Universitaires Françaises, 2008, p. 273-312

29 RAZAVET Jean-Claude, « Introduction », *De Freud à Lacan*, De Boeck Supérieur, 2008, pp.11-13.

potential threat for the physical integrity of men, it is not because she does not carry a penis, it is because she is the sign of this lack and could take revenge on men. Barbara Creed, a Professor of cinema studies specialized in cultural studies, analyzes the character of the “monstrous-feminine” using these elements of psychoanalysis, and her analysis keeps a Lacanian dimension especially when she states “Freud argued that women terrifies because she is castrated. Woman also terrifies because men endows her with imaginary powers of castration.”³⁰. The phallus is presented as the most iconic symbol of power and the female murderer is associated with the castrating woman because through the unspeakable act of murder she threatens that symbol, can even attempt to seize it and take control. Creed evokes the notion of “monstrous-feminine” that she connects directly with extreme female characters, such as deviant women, female murderers, female criminals, who threaten the masculine established order. Her reflection starts with an interrogation based on an observation : “Why has the concept of woman as monster been neglected in feminist theory? [...] Why has the image of woman as castrator, a major archetype of female monstrosity, been ignored?”³¹ and she grasps the problematic point, the core of the problem when she explains that “The notion of the monstrous-feminine challenges the view that femininity, by definition, constitutes passivity.”³² and she states that “The feminine imagination is seen as essentially non-violent, peaceful, unaggressive”³³. In *Gone Girl*, at the beginning, Amy seems passive because she is only present through the narrative voice-over resting on her diary. She is not physically present in the first part of the movie in the present time, she depicts through flashbacks her everyday life and her couple as something oppressive she has to endure. Nick seems to be the one who initiates and is active. But in the second part of the film, the spectator can see that these are just appearances and that Amy is the one who took the lead, especially through the murderous act. Being a female murderer puts Amy in the position of a castrating woman because she reverses the duality active men/passive women. At the beginning of the film (00:23:21), Detective Rhonda Boney's subaltern lists all the things registered in Amy's name (lease, car, credit cards, electricity, phone bills, The Bar) and he concludes that it is not surprising but it is “humiliating”. Suddenly, the house in which they move is Amy's house before all: during the tracking shot of them, the space is divided between the foreground where the detective and her colleague discuss the case and the background where a policeman is walking by, carrying one of Amy's dresses, another gathering evidences on the ironing board that Amy used before she disappeared. The tracking shot ends when they arrive in her dressing-room. There is no room for Nick, he is mentioned through the goods she owns, and the

30 Barbara CREED in *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, 1993, p. 87

31 *Idem*, p.152

32 *Idem*, p.151

33 *Idem*, p.156

image is saturated with elements belonging to or recall of Amy. In a very subtle way, in one camera movement, he is blotted out of the image and it is the premises of the symbolical castration he undergoes. Besides, the scene where she kills her highschool lover during sexual intercourse encapsulates this image: Desi is on top of her making love to her (cf. Photogram 3), he thinks that he is in control but eventually Amy refuses to let him embrace this position of a man in control and she slits his throat, while he is climaxing, and goes on top of him (cf. Photogram 4).



(Photogram n°3, 2:04:28)



(Photogram n°4, 2:05:06)

It is a sort of symbolical castration because even if she is not physically castrating him, she takes back the control and ascendancy. To quote Creed, in a way, Amy becomes more than a castrating woman, she obtains the status of the “phallicized heroine”³⁴ : the violence she exerts, the cutter that she uses that can be seen as a phallic symbol, all of these lead her to be reconstituted as masculine.

Thus, *Gone Girl* stands out because of the frightening character of Amy Dunne recalls many previous models such as the famous literary figures of Medea and Lilith or the archetype of the *femme fatale* from *film noir*. The use of psychoanalytical notions allows us to better understand the aura of power that emanates from the female murderer and by extension from Amy Dunne. But studying all these elements enhances the fact that Amy is a unique occurrence.

So far, the analysis of Amy Dunne was focused on her place in a larger picture and how she distances herself but her relation with the Other is furthermore very striking and relates of the

34 Barbara CREED in *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, 1993, p.155

special place she occupies in *Gone Girl* and in cinema in general.

When Amy D. meets the Other

Indeed, *Gone Girl* is the story of an odd, intense, and perverted relationship with the Other and especially within the couple. By the terms “Other” or “otherness”, I mean to evoke the question of identity and difference, the gap or sometimes closeness between the “self” and what is not our “self”. *Gone Girl* is a movie about the attempt to understand and to seize the Other, what it represents and to control the way it can interfere in our self-image.

Amy accepts Nick only because he ceased to be himself and became a projection of herself. She manages to make him fit into the mould of the man of her dreams and in this way he becomes a sort of extension of herself. But it is noticeable that her difficult relationship with otherness starts with herself. In Amy's case, “Je est un autre”.³⁵ Effectively, if we go on with a psycho-analytical reflection, the film seems to depict an original problem with herself, a kind of schizophrenia or “divided personnality”³⁶. The film shows that since she was a little girl, Amy Elliott has been pursued by her fictional double invented by her own parents, “Amazing Amy”. Amazing Amy is the improved double of Amy, she represents the Ideal that the real and flawed Amy will never reach : she is more talented, she succeeds in life, she is more popular. So the real Amy explains that she grew up with a pressure put onto her by a fictional character that her parents seemed to prefer. Despite knowing that Amy Elliott and Amazing Amy looked alike but were different, Amy had to deal with the public and the journalists who did not always differentiate them. The term “divided personnality” is relevant here because Amy is associated ans, at the same time, dissociated from Amazing Amy; people around her insist on their links but mark the difference by admitting that Amazing Amy is superior to Real Amy. Amy compares herself to Amazing Amy, casts on this fictional character her frustration but uses Amazing Amy's image at the end of the film to be more convincing in her role of survivor of abuse and caring wife.

The scene of the proposal is striking because it highlights the conflict within Amy's personnality. Amy and Nick attend to a party organized to celebrate the publication of the latest “Amazing Amy” book about her getting married. The sequence begins with an extreme close-up on Amy writing in her diary “Amazing fucking Amy is getting fucking married!” and adds “That's how the night started, with me regural, flawed, willingly, jealous as always of the golden child”, which gives an indication on Amy's feelings of jealousy, frustration, and self-doubt towards this event and

35 Arthur RIMBAUD, *Lettre du Voyant*, Lettre de Rimbaud à Paul Demeny, 15 mai 1871

36 Barbara CREED, in *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, 1993, p.78

her fictional double.

In this scene, at first Amazing Amy is the center of the attention: she is present through Amy's homodiegetic voice-over, she is the subject of this party (cf. Photogram 5) and the conversations between Amy and Nick, and Amy and her parents, she is materialized through tee-shirts, pens, posterboards, piles of books. Moreover, she is in opposition with the real Amy especially with some shots-reverse shots that create an opposition, a confrontation between the two of them.



(Photogram n°5, 00:12:11)

During this scene, Amy is characterized by the black color, slow camera movements, and a subdued light while Amazing Amy is a white and bright spot in every shot in which she appears. In photogram n°6, Amy and Nick dressed in black stand out against the background. There is no direct lighting on their faces whereas they are supposed to be the protagonists, but there is a spotlight on Amazing Amy's posterboard which makes the white color appear gleaming and creates a surrealist contrast with the yellow tone of the image because it creates an aura coming from beneath.



(Photogram n°6, 00:13:09)

At the beginning of the scene, it is all about Amazing Amy, she is omnipresent (Amy's mother even wears white and her father carries Amazing Amy's pens, which emphasizes the connection between Amazing Amy and them, while the real Amy is wearing black and barely stands out from the crowd). An aerial camera movement built on a tracking shot with a low-angle expresses the monopoly of Amazing Amy and her oppressive importance. The symmetry of the composition of the image produces an impression of domination and authority (cf. Photogram 7).



(Photogram n°7, 00:12:11)

Meanwhile, Nick and Amy are lost in medium shots with a softened light around them. It can be noticed that nothing distinguishes them from the crowd and no one is paying attention to them: they look like everyone else and furtive and passing shadows obscure the perspective and restrain the vision of the audience.



(Photogram n°8, 00:12:08)

But gradually, the scale of the shots shrinks and the couple Nick and Amy becomes more important through close-ups and a short focus. Amazing Amy disappears, she is not mentioned anymore because Nick is listing Amy's skills instead. Even the round and bright light in the middle of the table that could remind of Amazing Amy because it is present in other shots devoted to her, disappears from the image and the faces of Amy and Nick take priority over their environment.



(Photogram n°9a, 00:14:45)



(Photogram n°9b, 00:14:47)



(Photogram n°9c, 00:15:00)

Throughout the film, Amy is ceaselessly compared to Amazing Amy : during the press conference, she is referred as Amazing Amy (her father says “she really is amazing”, the official website is “www.findAmazingAmy.com”); researches and media coverage are based on the image of Amy Dunne associated with Amazing Amy's. But at the end of the film, when Amy Dunne is back, her return seems to mark the end of this divided personality. She did not become an ersatz of Amazing Amy, she is Amazing Amy and she even exceeds this fictional figure. A brief comparison of the shot where she is still seen and considered through Amazing Amy's image and the scene where Amazing Amy is seen through her tends to confirm that: whereas she enters in a room unknown and ignored because she is not Amazing Amy enough for the public, at the end, she is in the spotlights, she is the center of the attention and wears white, the color of this fictional figure.



(Photogram n°10, 2:15:29)

During this scene, Nick turns towards his in-laws and says “You must be so proud right now”. It is the sign that Amy has managed to surpass the Ideal of Amazing Amy and she becomes better than her fictional double, which is a real delight for her parents. In a way, her symbolic schizophrenia is resolved but the idea of a double personality remains because of what is shown to the public and what the reality is, between the perfect wife and victim of abuse, and the desperate murderous lover.

A criticism of society emerges from the description of the complicated relation of Amy with the Otherness. In fact, Amy has problems dealing with her own kind of divided personality (embodied by Amazing Amy), but she also she seems to have trouble in accepting others that she sees as a disappointing and insufficient entity, like her husband Nick for example and consequently this feeling towards other sharpens her critical eye on society.

The sequence where Amy re-appears in the narrative present illustrates her criticism of society and this difficulty in accepting otherness, especially with the criticism of the “cool girl”. This sequence puts on display a new aspect of Amy and the fact that she is drifting away from the norm. There is a clear criticism of the stereotype of “the cool girl” and this sequence breaks from the usual visual representation of women. Amy starts with her own story. The mall becomes a place where the criticism can be embodied. She talks about behaviours and characteristics while picking up stuff in the mall, which highlights the idea of consumerism: men and women choose their personality features as if they were choosing food and items in a supermarket. The high angle and medium close-up with a shallow focus on Amy in the mall personifies the pressure on her shoulders (cf. Photogram 11).



(Photogram n°11, 1:11:09)

An ironic link between what she is saying and what she is picking is drawn: she chooses some food and evokes the pressure of “[remaining] a size 2”, when she takes new sheets, she talks about her marital sexuality. When she arrives in the motel room, the combination of the voice-over and of the editing supports Amy's criticism: the illusion of marriage and Nick's transformation into

a deceptive and lazy husband are depicted through extreme close ups with quick cuts on dusty and old furniture, on expired goods (cf. Photogram 12).



(Photogram n°12, 1:12:02)

Amy criticizes the other women and the influence of society on them; she evokes the stereotype of “the cool girl” as a submissive figure described as reductive and demeaning. This criticism of the “cool girl” occurs through Amy's point of view: the voice-over formulates her feelings and the shots display her reaction. The girls used as examples are in their cars like trapped in little boxes. The fact that they are in their cars is not innocent: the object of the car can be perceived as a reference to the male dominant power since cars are a cliché; they are usually seen as a masculine element, symbol of power and control. The serie of shots-reverse shots highlights the contrast between them and Amy, and the fact that Amy does not want to be associated with them anymore.



(Photogram n°13a, 1:10:49)



(Photogram n°13b, 1:10:50)



(Photogram n°13c, 1:10:58)



(Photogram n°13d, 1:11:00)

The camera movements such as a tracking shot and a pan from a POV shot imply the movement of Amy herself who speeds along as if she was ahead of them, she was more evolved than them and that enables her to criticize the expectations that society casts upon them and the projection of men's desire on women's bodies and personalities. Amy occupies the space: she is in the middle of the road and the point of views of the shots are built on her gaze, which result in making her criticism more vivid and eloquent for the spectator. What is interesting is the fact that while she is deconstructing the stereotype of the “cool girl”, she is also evoking the fact that she built up her own cliché about men: she forged and shaped the man of her dreams.

It should be noted that this critical vision of society and especially Amy's disgust for the “cool girl” constraint could turn Amy into a new feminist hero. Indeed, feminist movements, and more particularly the third-wave feminism, criticize the many pressures or intimidations resting upon women and reducing their freedom³⁷. In this scene, Amy seems to denounce and condemn the pressure of patriarchy and the burden of an over-controlling society that dwell on the relationship between individuals or within the couple. The association of her narrating voice with extreme close-ups on goods, tracking shots in the mall and pans on women in their cars seems to support the idea of Amy as a feminist. But this affirmation can be contradicted by Amy's objectivation of men and

37 See Alice Echols. *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975*, University of Minnesota Press, 1989, for an insightful analysis of society and manifestations of patriarchal oppression of women.

her refusal of sisterhood.³⁸ When she says she forged the man of her dream, the process is similar to the one endured by women through the pressure from society to fit in certain categories. Besides, in the scene where she arrives at the motel, she meets her neighbor Greta but she establishes a distance between them. During this exchange, Greta always stays in the background while Amy remains in the foreground, the distance is at the center of the image. Apart from this medium long shot (cf. Photogram 14), they are not reunited together in the same shot because the scene rests on a series of shots-reverse shots.



(Photogram n°14, 1:15:39)

But in the swimming pool scene, the same process is in action and shows that Amy is not willing to bond or make a female friend. This time, they appear in the same shot but the distance that Amy initiates remains and manifests itself through the image: the angle is slightly displaced, Amy is out of focus, she does not look at Greta, the image is composed like a dissonant symmetry (cf. Photograms 15a and 15b).



(Photogram n°15a, 1:17:33)

38 The notion of sisterhood is crucial to 2nd wave feminism, and is about the connection between women, the fact that they are united, caring and supporting each other. Based on the same model as “brotherhood”, sisterhood implies care and kindness to understand and provide a safe listening space. It also implies the identification as a woman and the sense of belonging to this group.

See Verta TAYLOR "Sisterhood, Solidarity, and Modern Feminism", *Gender and Society*, 1989 for more explanations on the notion of sisterhood and its application in everyday life.



(Photogram n°15b, 1:17:41)

Hence, we saw that Amy, through her criticism of society and one of the symptoms of its decay, the “cool girl”, drifts away from the norm. She slowly becomes the Other to the point of her becoming a monster. But what is a monster? Traditionally, a monster is a repulsive and disturbing entity, associated with evil or fears. A monster is something “else”, something we judge as out of the norm. It is the representation of the threatening, because unpredictable, Other. Amy can be seen as a monstrous figure because she acts in an extreme and non-standard way that provokes dread more than empathy.

The cathartic figure of the monster is essential in *Gone Girl*: the female murderer here has a monstrous dimension. Amy is directly related to the figure of the “monstrous feminine” because she is extreme, uncompromising, unconditional, and absolute. In the construction of Amy as a monstrous figure, the role of the reflection of the mirror is crucial because this device emphasizes the theme of duality mentioned earlier through the idea of “divided personnalit^y”³⁹. In her essay, Barbara Creed says about the monstrous feminine that “The monstrous is produced at the border which separates those who take up their proper gender roles from those who do not.”⁴⁰ and in *Gone Girl*, it should be noticed that Amy decides to deflect these proper gender roles and the fears wrapped around them. For example, when she executes her plan against Desi by harming her wrists with some strings and simulating a rape by introducing a bottle in her vagina, she performs that in front of a mirror and she becomes her own spectator. She uses the fears attached to the assumed destructive power of female sexuality on men: women are often accused of false allegations of

39 Barbara CREED, in *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, 1993, p.78

40 Barbara CREED, in *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, 1993, p.11

rape⁴¹ and “False allegations,[...], hold a disproportionate place in the public imagination”⁴². During this scene, she embraces the idea of a monstrous feminine and the figure of the monster because she produces horror in the spectator's mind. She does not speak but the act itself and the fact she is staring at herself in the mirror while doing it create the image of a monster stuck in its own distorted world: by staring at her in the mirror, she excludes others and she watches herself as a spectacle (cf. Photogram 16).



(Photogram n°16, 02:02:50)

It is interesting to see that the camera movements accompany the emergence of Amy as a proper monstrous figure. When the scene begins in the bathroom, the extradiegetic low key music is creating an odd but yet not suspicious atmosphere, the camera angle is very low and shows Amy from behind in a medium shot. The spectator does not have access to any informations on Amy's project, he is like a curious, mute, and invisible entity, hidden in a corner of the room (cf. Photograph 17a). Thanks to a slight tracking shot and a tilt up, the spectator is brought nearer Amy. At first, the camera stands on Amy's left with a medium close shot but shifts with a cut to Amy's right with the same frame (cf. Photograms 17b and 17c) when it becomes clear that she is hurting herself to hurt Desi. Like this, the camera becomes the concrete manifestation of Amy's flipping into insanity; changing perspectives like that reveals a change in the action and in Amy's state of mind. The music is very important in this scene because it accompanies the gradual sense of dread that the spectator might feel : at first, very low and discreet, it becomes more pounding, and metallic and dissonant sounds translate the horrific character of Amy's plan.

41 Rape is a real problem in the USA and many investigations begin to tackle this issue, especially with sexual assaults in universities. When allegations of rape are made, they are most of the time accused of being false.

See Donna ZUCKERBERG's article on Jezebel, “He Said, She Said: The Mythical History of the False Rape Allegation”, *jezebel.com*, 2015

Barbara BOOTH's article “One of the most dangerous places for women in America”, *cnc.com*, 2015 or The Huffington Post dossier on “College Rape Culture”.

42 Donna ZUCKERBERG, in “He Said, She Said: The Mythical History of the False Rape Allegation”, *jezebel.com*, 2015



(Photogram n°17a, 02:02:30)



(Photogram n°17b, 02:02:32)



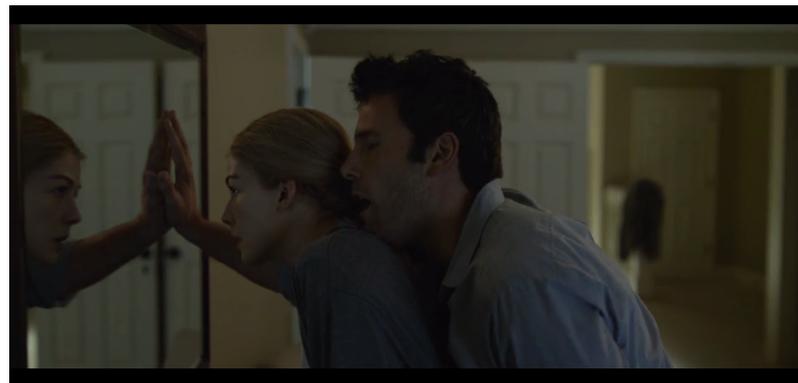
(Photogram n°17c, 02:02:45)

Hence, *Gone Girl* is punctuated with images, and scenes, where mirrors and mirror reflections take a great place and act as metaphors. For example, when Amy narrates the slow decay of her couple, the progressive disinterest of Nick for her, an intimate scene is used as an illustration. The scene shows Amy and Nick having sexual intercourse in front of a mirror. Amy stares at their reflection while Nick keeps his eyes closed (cf. Photogram 18a), and it works as a metaphor of the fact they are just a reflection of what they used to be together. The mirror reflection allows Amy to realize that something changed in their relation and to mark a shift in their relation (cf. Photogram 18b). A slow-moving tracking shot on them emphasizes and encapsulates this moment and the camera tracks out to symbolize Nick's gradual estrangement (cf. Photogram 18c). Besides, the mirror forms a frame within the frame that signify their imprisonment in their own marriage and in

theirs false pretenses. They became monsters for each other, that is to say strangers and threatening.



(Photogram n°18a, 00:45:03)



(Photogram n°18b, 00:45:07)



(Photogram n°18c, 00:45:16)

Mirror reflections are important in the construction of the image of Amy as a monster because they are like important steps of Amy's seizure of power. One of the major points converging towards the vision of Amy as a “cinematographic hapax” is the fact that Amy does not fit the traditional passive position of female characters in movie plots or even the traditional position of female murderers. Indeed, Amy Dunne does not kill “as a woman” that is, and I quote here Rebecca Stringer, when “suffering psychic trauma and provoked by grievous loss, and in a manner more conflicted by conscience than is socially expected of a man”⁴³. Amy does not regret her murderous act as it would be expected from her, she is obviously on the wrong side of the law

43 Rebecca STRINGER in *Feminism at the movies*, Routledge, 2011, p.274

but no guilt, no shame, no punishment for her.

Most of the time, female characters are the victims of male monsters,⁴⁴ they are characterized as passive and vulnerable, men remain the cause of their actions but they are not granted with the power to be truly a subject. *Thelma and Louise* (1991, MGM), *Alien* (1992, 20th Century Fox), *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015, Warner Bros) seem to be rare occurrences of plots that bring forward original and strong female characters⁴⁵. And even the popular “chick flicks” which main goal is to be movies for a feminine audience and to represent characters of independent women, fail because most of the time they just repeat all the usual clichés and are caricatural: at the end, no matter how ambitious or strong-willed a woman can be, she is always looking for a man or a husband, and her professional success only hides a lack and a crave for a family or a relationship. In *Gone Girl*, Amy appears as a very powerful and clever female character, and the way she uses her power is particularly impressive.

An almighty figure ?

Amy can be considered as a “cinematographic hapax” because of the way she borrows some features from literary and cinematographic figures but at the same time drifts away from the tradition, and because of the issue of her interaction with otherness. Still, these two elements only underline the power that Amy owns. The characterization of Amy as a cinematographic hapax goes along with the representation of this character as an almighty figure. The question of power drives *Gone Girl* in terms of narrative, plot, and character interaction. By “power”, I mean the ability to create something, the authority to do something and make people act accordingly. It is directly linked to the capacity to influence, have an impact or an effect on the others and the world around but it is also linked to the notions of domination, manipulation, action, and authority because it implies an asymmetry in the relationship between social agents. According to Max Weber, “le pouvoir est toute chance de faire triompher au sein d’une relation sociale, sa propre volonté, même contre des résistances ; peu importe sur quoi repose cette chance.”⁴⁶. Michelle Coquillat defines “power” as “the ability to change others' life, the capacity to shape their behaviors but also the decisive and crucial impact that one can have on the others”⁴⁷. It can be noticed that in *Gone Girl*,

44 Barbara Creed, in *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, 1993, p.1

45 I chose these three films as examples because they are three popular and contemporary productions acknowledged for their representations of strong and independent female characters of Thelma, Louise, Ripley and Imperator Furiosa.

46 Max WEBER, in *Économie et société*, tome I, Agora, 2003, p.95

47 Michelle COQUILLAT, in *Femmes de pouvoir : mythes et fantasmes*, KRAKOVITCH, SELLIER and VIENNOT, L'Harmattan, 2001, p.17

Amy turns upside down Nick, Thomas or Desi' lives, she imposes her will and does not let the choice of decision. She acts on what is the best way for her to keep her power and influence on others, and especially Nick. The scene of the shower illustrates it: she confirms to Nick that she killed Desi but she implies that now he owes her because she did for him, to save him from death penalty. She could have been vulnerable by confessing Desi's murder but in fact, she uses it to establish and consolidate her power and stranglehold on Nick. This kind of power usually belongs to men but in *Gone Girl*, a reversal of situation happens and Amy seizes the sort of power that she is not supposed to have.

Indeed, Amy holds a leading position in the narration of *Gone Girl*, she is a strong narrative authority. She has the advantage in this struggle for power from a narrative point of view since she is the one who sets up a trap for Nick but also from a structural point of view because she leads the narration and the focalization by putting her voice-over as the main stream of information for the spectator. The camera movements frequently follows her as if she had a centripetal and magnetic force, like in the scene built on flashbacks where the spectator discovers that she made up a story to accuse Nick: the camera with tracking shots explores the house but irresistibly goes back to Amy writing in her diary and focuses on her through closer shots.



(Photogram n°19, 1:09:26)

Voice-overs throughout the film have a major role in the narrative construction of *Gone Girl*. From the beginning of the story, she replaces Nick's original voice-over and takes a stance opposite to Nick's. *Gone Girl* opens on an extreme close shot of Amy's head, at first it looks like a tender and intimate moment between lovers but Nick laconically confesses that when he thinks “of [his] wife, [he] always [thinks] of her head, [he pictures] cracking her lovely skull, unspooling her brain, trying to get answers”. It gives a hint of the tone of this movie; this statement sounds like he is implying the end of a relationship or a complicated relation, but as soon as Amy replaces him with her voice-over, she creates a dissonance : the spectator is brought to the first time Nick and Amy meet through her diary beginning with “I'm so crazy, stupid happy. I met a boy, a great, sweet, gorgeous and

coolest guy”, he has a direct insight of their intimacy. The voice-over is a means and a tool for Amy to have power and to exert it on the course of events, on the narrative, on Nick, on the police, on the media, and on the spectators.

The voice-over initiates a distance from the actions on screen, every occurring event or action is subjected to the prism of interpretation. In the case of *Gone Girl*, every event written down in Amy's diary or narrated by her is a re-presentation, and so in a way a re-writing, of reality, it is a biased understanding of what happened: it plays on the idea of “what could have happened” or “what might happen”. Because it is usually expected from the voice-over to be a simple commentary, Amy surprises the spectator by using the voice-over to serve her own interests and to control the movie. Moreover, the treatment of the voice-over in *Gone Girl* is also truly fascinating because as Michel Chion states it, the voice-over, and in this case in particular, is “ni tout à fait dedans, ni clairement dehors [...], [laissé] en errance à la surface de l'écran”⁴⁸. Amy uses this in-between position of the voice-over to manipulate the spectator and to imply subtly an identification.

Michel CHION analyzes this phenomenon:

Souvent, dans les films, quelqu'un qui n'est ni mort ni presque-mort se met à raconter quelque chose et l'action présente s'immobilise; la voix du narrateur se détache de son corps et revient en acousmètre hanter les images du passé que ses paroles suscitent. Elle parle depuis un point où le temps s'est pour un temps suspendu. Ce qui en fait une « voix-je », ce n'est pas seulement l'utilisation de la première personne du singulier. C'est surtout une manière de sonner et d'occuper l'espace, une certaine proximité par rapport à l'oreille du spectateur, une certaine façon d'investir celui-ci et d'entraîner son identification.⁴⁹

So it is a double shock for the spectator: first, he realizes that the voice-over lied to him, that the narration was in fact not reliable. When Amy builds a portrait of Nick as a lazy, violent, indifferent person through her voice reading her diary, the spectator understands that the diary was not a proof of truth. Secondly, it is a shock because the spectator forgot that anytime the person from the voice-over can appear and manifest himself, and so “désacousmatiser [la] voix.”⁵⁰. Michel Chion calls the “présence acousmatique” an “acousmètre” and recognizes that this presence is overwhelming and powerful because it is not a physically embodied presence, it is insubstantial and non-located and so this presence can be stopped⁵¹. The idea that Amy is a powerful and crushing narrative authority comes from this use of the voice-over, and the link between power and voice-over has been made by Pascal Bonitzer when he states:

[...] la voix off représente un pouvoir, celui de disposer de l'image et de ce qu'elle reflète, depuis un lieu absolument autre (de celui qu'inscrit la bande-image).

48 Michel CHION, *La voix au cinéma*, Editions de l'Etoile/Cahiers du Cinéma, collection Essais, Paris, 1993, p.18

49 *Ibid.*, p.53

50 *Ibid.*, p.32

51 *Ibid.* p.35

Absolument autre et absolument indéterminé. Et en ce sens, transcendant : d'où cet incontestable, incontesté, supposée-savoir. En tant qu'elle surgit au champs de l'Autre, la voix off est supposée savoir : telle est l'essence de son pouvoir.⁵²



(Photogram n°20, 00:46:49)

Moreover, the editing supports Amy's story because her words are illustrated with images. For example, when she confides her impression that she is something disposable for Nick, a close shot of her appears: the background where Nick and his family stand is out-of-focus, Amy is looking off-camera, at the opposite of the direction of the perspective (cf. Photogram 21). This image just accentuates the loneliness and doubts she feels and talks about through the narrative authority that the voice-over represents.



(Photogram n°21, 00:41:57)

In this scene, Amy's voice-over evokes her fear of Nick and images come to support her version of the story. She is shown in her bath, she seems small, vulnerable and she is framed by the edge of the bathtub like trapped. The quick editing, the medium shot of Nick and his shadow obscuring the image contribute to establish Nick as a potential and dangerous threat for Amy.

52 Pascal BONITZER, *Le Regard et la Voix: essais sur le cinéma*, U.G.E., collection 10/18, 1976.



(Photogram n°22a, 00:48:48)



(Photogram n°22b, 00:48:53)

Moreover, the function of the voice-over is very specific in cinema: it is a tool close to the literary “I”, which is also powerful and multi-functional and it not only simply comments the film in an artificial way to facilitate the audience's understanding, this tool also invents and creates another level of meaning and significance.

In *Gone Girl*, Amy's use of the voice-over device reminds of the “divine word”. Indeed, Amy creates a whole story within the story elaborated by the movie: she is an almighty character who creates a way through the movie frame itself. She is powerful because her words have a creative dimension: they are sufficient to imply, invent, manipulate the characters and the spectator. Thus, she elaborates a negative portrait of Nick that destroys his social image, then her fictional diary is considered as a valuable testimony and is vested with a destructive power. She is the one who decides when she wants to talk and what she wants to disclose (for example when she is interrogated by the policemen). Her power rests upon her capacity to blur the lines between fiction and reality in order to manipulate and remain in control. Her diary is once again a perfect example. She is the only one at the beginning who knows the truth and she is ahead of the other characters and spectators. She can be compared to a puppet master and this comparison is backed up with the memories of her ex-lover. He explains to Nick that when he was with Amy, she “annexed” him, she made him “her business”. Besides, Amy concedes that with Nick, she “forged the man of [her] dreams.”.

The “back from the dead” sequence contributes to settle Amy as an almighty figure because she controls the rhythm of the editing which is tuned to the way she narrates. Indeed, shots succeed one another quite rapidly with clear cuts and translate the irritation that Amy feels about the injunction to be a “cool girl”. It proves again how she controls the film itself and it is particularly obvious when she is in the toilets of an ordinary rest area. She enumerates the perks of the “cool girl”, and the succession of the shots follows the cadence of her words “Cool girl is hot, cool girl is game, cool girl is fun, cool girl never gets angry at her man”. When her voice drops when she says “cool girl never gets angry at her man” stopping suddenly the ternary rhythm, the camera slightly tilts down and materializes this intonation of speech.

Besides, Amy belongs to the category of female murderers in fiction movies but she transcends this type of characters because she is a multidimensional female murderer. First, she kills Nick's reputation by putting him in front of police accusations and media interest. Then, she performs a physical act of murder that allows her to join the category of female murderers figures in the traditional sense of the word: she cuts Desi's throat in the middle of sexual intercourse. This bloody and violent way of killing and the fact that her crime is linked to her sexuality compose a unique, striking and contradictory : like that, Amy rejects the common clichés attached to women and femininity in general: she is in opposition with the traditional image of sweet and caring life-bearer and she gets the active part during the sexual encounter. But what is interesting with Amy is the fact that she attempts to commit murder by using an intermediary, the State itself. Indeed, she wants to take revenge on Nick and kill him but her original plan was to provide a lot of false evidences to make him look guilty of her murder and let the death penalty in effect in Missouri applies to his case. This is quite an original and seizing way to attempt to commit murder, it is another level of manipulation because here the public institution of the State contributes to the murder.

Furthermore, Amy is truly an almighty figure and it can be observed that it is accentuated by her immunity and untouchability. This untouchability manifests itself through the creation of a distance between her and the spectator. Even if the voice-over is supposed to foster the identification process, the spectators can never entirely experience it because the image works as a safeguard. Indeed, it is a recurrent motif in *Gone Girl*: during intense moments, an intermediary often interferes and keeps Amy's influence and her subversive character away. For example, during the scene where she fakes her own rape and captivity in Desi's lake house, the camera alternates the shots from inside and outside the window in order to create a distance, to cut short the usual compassion felt for a victim and display her power, her acting skills, her ability to manipulate images and create stories out of nowhere (cf. Photograms 23 and 24).



(Photogram n°23, 2:01:09)



(Photogram n°24, 2:01:18)

It can be noted here that it is the same angle and action but seen from different points of view in order to highlight the gap between reality and fiction, between what she is really doing and what she is satging. The window comes as a screen, a transparent shield that creates a distance and encapsulates the power that emanates from Amy.



(Photogram n°25, 2:05:58)

The window as a distancing-effect screen also occurs when Amy comes back home: it makes concrete the fact that the spectator cannot be fooled anymore, he knows the truth and it creates a barrier and a distance (cf. Photogram 25).

Undeniably, Amy Dunne holds the position of an almighty and omnipotent figure and

it is made possible thanks to the role of extreme close-ups in the construction of such a figure. Mary Ann Doane theorizes the importance of extreme close-ups in cinema in terms of characterization and organization of cinematic narration. She explains that a close-up “transforms the face into an instance of the gigantic, the monstrous: it overwhelms”⁵³. And it is absolutely the case with Amy when she appears on screen through close-ups. Extreme close-ups of her face focus the entire attention on her and erect her as an authoritative figure; it deeply enhances her power. Besides, it amplifies her monstrous character and when pictured through close-ups, she seems to be suspended in time and space: her face and her gaze only matter, the questions “where is she?” and “when?” are overshadowed. Deleuze takes the close-up and especially the extreme close-up as a subject of study and explains that a process of saturation occurs when filming faces or objects with this scale of shots⁵⁴. For him, the extreme close-up marks the passage to the status of an entity.⁵⁵ Consequently, it is not innocent that *Gone Girl* begins with an extreme close-up of Amy's head, it places her from the very start in a position where she confronts the camera, seems threatening and suspends time and space⁵⁶. The presence of extreme close-ups in *Gone Girl* cannot be reduced to the simple idea of magnification: these are the symptoms of a change and they create a confrontation, a one-on-one moment that forces the spectator to get active, to get involved because a proximity is created (cf. Photograms 26 to 29).



(Photogram n°26, 00:00:29)

53 Mary Ann DOANE, *Femmes Fatales, : Feminism, Film Theory and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, 1991, p.46

54 Gilles DELEUZE, in *L'Image-Mouvement*, Editions de Minuit, 1983, p.26

55 Gilles DELEUZE, in “L'Image-affection: visage et gros plan”, *L'Image-Mouvement*, Editions de Minuit, 1983, “[...] le gros plan n'arrache nullement son objet à un ensemble dont il ferait partie, dont il serait une partie, mais, ce qui est tout à fait différent, il l'abstrait de toutes coordonnées spatio-temporelles, c'est-à-dire il l'élève à l'état d'Entité.” (p.136)

56 Belà BALÀZS, *Le cinéma : nature et évolution d'un art nouveau*, Payot, 2011, p.57



(Photogram n°27, 1:09:37)



(Photogram n°28, 1:09:51)



(Photogram n°29, 1:12:55)

Extreme close-ups in the case of Amy are overwhelming: her face occupies the whole space of the frame, she focuses the attention of the gaze and dominates the image. Extreme close-ups of her are very impressive and intense because of the frame within the frame composition. Once again, she is in command of the situation, she is the one who has the power and extreme close-ups are manifestation of this power.

Throughout this study, the idea of control and gaz has been evoked separately but not together, whether it was about Amy's gaze or the spectator's gaze. This question of power and gaze in cinema is extremely important but it becomes a real issue in *Gone Girl*. Jacques Aumont sums up

Mulvey's idea by pointing out the fact that usually the presence of female figures aims to freeze, block the narrative stream because it implies erotic contemplation.⁵⁷ Yet, in *Gone Girl*, Amy Dunne seems to deflect this tendency because she turns it to her advantage, especially in the scene when she has sex with Desi and kills him when he climaxes. In this scene which encapsulates the duality eros/thanatos that women carry in the collective consciousness, static shots stress her naked body and its eroticism, which eclipses the violence of the forthcoming act (cf. Photogram 30). For a moment, the image fulfills the scopic drive: the spectator is put in a position where he feels a dreadful visual pleasure⁵⁸.



(Photogram n°30, 2:03:55)

The character of Amy is at the center of the question of “to-be-looked-at-ness” established by Laura Mulvey⁵⁹. Laura Mulvey explores the issue of the gaze in cinema and she states that there are three types of gaze in cinema since cinema is a visual art: the camera's gaze, the intradiegetic character gaze and the spectator's gaze. These gazes are presupposed to be masculine and heterosexual, and so it implies consequences on the way male and female characters are seen, treated, and filmed.

When Laura Muvley evokes spectatorship, she explains that the audience is perceived first as a male audience and that a process of “masculinisation” of the gaze is at stake so women in movies become objects submitted to a male gaze inside and outside the film. The female character cristallises the notion of “to-be-looked-at-ness”: the male characters in movie are the bearer of the gaze, while the female characters are seen⁶⁰. A visual tension between seeing and being seen is at

57 Jacques AUMONT, in *L'Analyse des Films*, Armand Colin, 2004, and Laura MULVEY, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, Oxford Universitary Press, 1999, “The presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation.”, p.837

58 *Idem*. Laura MULVEY explains that “Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen.”

59 Laura MULVEY, in “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, Oxford Universitary Press, 1999, p.837.

60 Laura MULVEY in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* states that “In a world ordered by sexual imbalance,

stake⁶¹. So when the female characters overstep what is expected from them by appropriating power through the murderous act, it could be claimed that she goes against the male gaze.

Amy does not only divert from the norm by being a female murderer. Amy is an all-mighty figure from a structural and narrative dimension but it is also interesting to notice that she diverts from the usual “to-be-looked-at-ness”. When she looks directly at the camera or when she is the one in control of what can be seen or not, like in Desi's house when she is very careful of what it is recorded, how it is recorded and how she stages herself, she tries to control and guide the gaze of the audience. The camera often tries to divide up Amy's body, which can be perceived as a process of objectification but it is gripping to underline the fact that when some close shots are made of Amy, there a distance created by a window or a windshield, for example, in order to establish a sort of barrier between the character and the gaze of the camera and the audience and to avoid any objectification. Amy seems to be conscious of her position as an erotic object but she is not submitted to this status. This idea of supraconsciousness is the bedrock of Amy's power.

The term “supra-consciousness” comes from academic researches in linguistics and especially Lisa Gauvin's works⁶² in which she uses this notion to explain the curious situation of writers stuck between two languages, two cultures (for example, Quebecer or post-colonial writers). In their case, the choice of language is not self-evident: they are in a linguistic supra-consciousness because they have to decide in which language they want to write and take account of the repercussions for their readers or the proper expression their art.

The transfer of this concept from the area of literature to the cinema studies implies that the meaning is different. Whereas Gauvin's concept focuses on literary modes of expression and on the linguistic discomfort of the writer, the notion of “supra-consciousness” is directly connected to the notions of gaze and representation.

In *Gone Girl*, the notion of “supra-consciousness” can apply to Amy because she is well-aware of the status she has, she perfectly knows what sort of gaze she has to deal with and the fact that there are great implications related to this gaze and her actions. She seems to know that she is looked through the prism of a male gaze and she chooses to move and act at cross-purposes anyway, and the consequence of that position statement, besides leaving the audience puzzled, is Amy's power increasing. The symptoms of this supra-consciousness occur for example when Amy looks directly

pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness.”, p.837.

61 Christina LANE and Nicole RICHTER, in *Feminism at the movies*, Routledge, 2011, p.189

62 Lise GAUVIN, in «D'une langue l'autre. La surconscience linguistique de l'écrivain francophone», *L'écrivain francophone à la croisée des langues*, Karthala, 1997, p.6-15.

at the camera.



(Photogram n°31, 2:24:30)



(Photogram n°32, 1:06:07)

Amy is also supra-conscious of the question of visual pleasure, she knows what the intradiegetic characters and the spectators expect and want to see so when she decides to show her body it is only to turn down this desire against them and this display of her nudity is only one more step in her plan.

This idea of supra-consciousness is not circumscribed to the visual field, it can also be found in the way Amy seems to use at her convenience the expectations resting upon women and the clichés shaping their representation. She plays with the stereotype of the female victim and knows how to direct the gaze; her actions take a subversive dimension. For example, she uses her personal interest the fact that media and people are more touched or prone to react when the victim is a pregnant woman, so she fakes a pregnancy. When she is interrogated by a large group of policemen on her kidnapping, she forges herself an image of survivor: she pretends to feel guilty (“I’ve just tried to be nice to him...[...] oh my God...I’ve encouraged him...”) and leans her testimony on frightful details (“May I go back to when I’ve been held prisoner by a man with history of mental illness?”, “He tied me up like a dog, and then he punished me, starved me, shaved me, sodomized me”). During this scene, Amy knowingly uses her status of victim in order to manipulate and remain powerful. I will quote Rebecca Stringer who takes over Belinda Morrissey's essay on female

murderers⁶³ and evokes the reduction and categorization of murderous women as victims with the pretext that they were suffering from:

a state of diminished responsibility, [that] would seem to confirm Morrissey's finding that women who kill are most often represented as victims rather than fully responsible actors in the crimes they commit – a representation Morrissey traces across media, law and feminist discourses, arguing it is problematic because it denies women fully agency and humanity⁶⁴

Amy turns the potential infantilization and dehumanization of this position to her advantage in order to be cleared and not suspected. At the end, her side of the story wins and it re-affirms her as an almighty figure. It can even be said that she succeeds in exceeding the cliché. A cliché is a stuck image, a category that is reductive and limiting but Amy manages to go beyond and to appropriate the codes of the clichés and expectations.

In the men's world, power is in fact divided in two : men have a public and authoritative power, their power is visible for everyone, but women have a power related to the secret, to the field of manipulation and conspiracy, which does not have social existence and can be easily revoked, it is a power circumscribed to the domestic space. This specific case applies in *Gone Girl* but with a reversal: Amy uses her “secret power” and turns it into something concrete and even superior to Nick's kind of power. Once again, Amy appears as an almighty figure with no concurrence.

Hence, Amy is a somehow unique film character: she tends to divert from the usual representation of the female murderer in cinema, her interaction with the others are particularly problematical and brings up the problem of the otherness along with the questions of domination and hierarchy, and finally she positions herself as an almighty figure with a stronghold on the narrative structure and on the images. Images and the way they are created, the way Amy embezzles them, the way they impact on the spectators and the intradiegetic characters found the bedrock of Amy's power and supra-consciousness.

63 Belinda MORRISSEY, *When Women Kill: Questions of Agency and Subjectivity*, Routledge, 2003.

64 Rebecca STRINGER, in *Feminism at the Movies*, Routledge, 2011.

II/ Dialectics of representation in *Gone Girl* : the body and the gaze

This idea of supra-consciousness has a major influence on the question of representation in *Gone Girl*. The dialectics of representation rests upon two elements in this movie: the body and the gaze. By dialectics, I refer to the process of representation and confrontation, and the fact body and gaze are crucial in this process, in this movement that drive the movie. These two elements are once again under Amy's influence and it is visible with the “instrumentalisation” of the female body. Usually, the way of representation of the female body in cinema is purely aesthetic; women see their bodies confiscated and endure a sort of objectification and fragmentation: the image directs the gaze, assumed to be male and heterosexual⁶⁵, on parts of the female body only because, as mentioned earlier, passive female bodies have to be seen, looked at, and displayed. Women are seen as icons and it allows for the fragmentation of their bodies.

Instrumentalization of the female body

Amy seems to be fully aware and supra-conscious of this issue and that's why she decides to exploit her own body in order to undermine the process of objectification.

Firstly, she turns her body into a weapon. It is a destructive weapon when she uses it to take her revenge on her ex-boyfriend. During the scene in which Nick and him talk about their mutual experience of Amy, her body is not shown but it is described as poisonous and misleading. Thomas describes her body with positive terms but her body causes his loss. In this case, her body is destructive. It leads to the destruction of Thomas's social image and reputation.

But at some point, her body becomes more than an indirect weapon to hit, it becomes a physical and deadly weapon like in the scene where she kills Desi. This scene puts her body at the center of the attention: she wears white underwears, yet her body is in fact poisonous. The symmetry of the composition gives an idea of harmony: the shot is static and exposes the whole moment when she takes off her dress, in order to satisfy the male gaze of the audience (cf. Photogram 33).

65 Laura MULVEY, “Visueal Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, *Film Theory and Criticism : Introductory Readings*, Oxford Universitary Press, 1999, see p. 837



(Photogram n°33, 2:03:55)

But the editing becomes epileptic when she cuts off Desi's throat, the metallic music and the quick fade-in emphasize the violence of the scene and just like a knife or a hand that has been used as a crime weapon, Amy's body is soiled and stained with the victim's blood. The harmony of the room is gone, the camera's perspective is slightly off-center as an illustration of the end of the general harmony implied by the symmetric composition of the image, but Amy's body covered in blood takes center stage, she is the axis around which is composed the image (cf. Photogram 34).



(Photogram n°34, 2:05:22)

Moreover, her body is also a defense weapon that she uses to fake her innocence. In fact, her body is a tool to manipulate others. The scene when she is preparing her body to fake a rape can be compared to the moment when a knife is sharpened. The beginning of the scene is voluntarily misleading: the camera is irresistibly attracted to Amy, so a pan, a tilt up and then a tilt down succeed each other to bring the spectator closer to her. A close-up of her hands shows her choosing a cutter: it leads the spectator to legitimately think that this is a potential crime weapon.



(Photogram n°35, 2:02:40)

But the camera angle changes perspective and a static shot allows the spectator to see and understand what she is doing and see her plan getting concrete. He understands that her body is like a ticking bomb ready to explode and harm Desi in the process. In this scene, the threat is moved: instead of the cutter (whereas it is the real crime weapon, she is going to cut his throat with it), it is her own body that carries the threat.

Another moment during the film when she uses her body as a tool for manipulation is quite striking: when she arrives at the front of her home covered in blood, at the end of the movie (cf. Photogram 36).



(Photogram n°36, 2:06:11)

This sequence does not put the emphasis on Amy's body at first: her car is heard before she appears on screen. this off-camera sound puts Nick in movement and acts as a trigger, and it relaunches the action. The camera follows Nick with a tracking shot, then a medium close shot of him permits to see his reaction, to sense that Amy is back. At first, Amy's body is not displayed, a suspense is created: a close shot shows her in her car, the red blood is visible on her face but not vivid, a larger shot allows the audience to see Amy passing by her car. The camera movement is connected to the movements of the journalists behind her because the camera pans to follow her and to keep her in the center of the image until she falls in Nick's arms while the journalists and photographs are feverishly following her from behind. There is an interesting change in the scale of

shots during this sequence: the pan starts on Amy with a full shot, her blood-stained dress is put forth, her innocence and her status of victim seem incontestable because it seems to be marked directly on her body. But slowly, the pan ends up on a close shot of Nick and Amy, the image is not cornered by her body anymore: the image refers to a quite intimate moment from the private sphere. This camera movement shows that her exploited body is essential for the public sphere in order to prove her innocence: she publicizes and exposes her body, whereas when she is with Nick, she no longer need to use her body in that way because he is not dupe.

What is interesting is the fact that this instrumentalization of her body allows two processes at the same time: first, she uses it as a proof of innocence; she stages her own body to manipulate others, to create a whole new representation of her. Her body is truly displayed in front of an audience and it is like a costume. And then, in a way, her body takes in charge the narration, it tells a story: language is no longer necessary when she arrives covered in blood because her body becomes a signifier or a symbol of her status as victim and survivor.

“Si d’un point de vue visuel, formel, le corps se revendique clairement comme moteur esthétique de la représentation, il prend en charge également la narration. En effet, le corps devient le biais par lequel l’histoire du film nous est donnée à voir. Il est l’équivalent d’une voix narrative qui donne au récit sa chair au sens propre comme au sens figuré. Les codes traditionnels de la construction narrative au cinéma sont donc totalement bouleversés ; le corps oriente le récit à partir non plus de schémas « classiques » - situation initiale, élément perturbateur, péripéties, résolution finale – mais sur une narration qui est totalement prise en charge par le personnage.”⁶⁶

This quote from Jodie Melyon's essay refers to *Wanda* (1970, Foundation for Filmmakers), *À nos amours* (1984, Gaumont) and *A Woman Under The Influence* (1974, Faces Music) and illustrates the fact that the body can be sufficient to tell a story, to even become a narrative authority in cinema. The idea that she raises can be applied to our movie under study because cinema stages bodies in movement and in *Gone Girl*, Amy's body takes tells a story.

Besides, Jodie Melyon adds :

“Le corps a donc la capacité de prendre en charge les éléments narratifs du film et par là- même, dit, raconte l’histoire. Et ce qui est d’autant plus intéressant, dans ce que l’on peut appeler le « renversement narratif », c’est de voir en quoi les corps permettent aussi le « déplacement narratif ». Comme par un effet de glissement, de décadage, le corps oriente la perception, la vision que l’on a de l’histoire. Il apporte d’autres significations à l’histoire et en offre une autre lecture.”⁶⁷

This idea of “déplacement narratif” is perfectly embodied by the pan in the sequence of Amy returning to Nick. The pan translates the importance of the instrumentalization of Amy's body: from a public point of view, her body is analyzed and seen as the illustration of Amy's story and experience. Her body imposes itself as the only legitimate version: she turns her body into a public

66 Jodie MELYON, *Des corps sans cadre, le corps féminin comme forme autonome*, thesis, 2014, p.18

67 *Ibid.*

object in order to make her side of the story unequivocal. Her body becomes a medium of signification, story-telling, and symbolization. In this scene, Amy does not pronounce a word but, still, she provokes a reaction and creates a story thanks to her body.

The scene in the shower is even more enlightening: Amy and Nick are naked in the shower, they are not wearing any clothes that could stand as a costume or imply another story, and her naked body is forced to reveal the truth. The water cleans and removes the blood on her and it symbolizes the access to the truth: the body covered in blood is just a story for the media and the people from the outside; interpretations and emotions are cast on this body that tells a whole story by itself. But in the private and intimate space of the shower, every story and lie vanish with the running water and the instrumentalization of the body ends. Indeed, clothes have a role in the way the body is perceived, they act as a costume and take part in the instrumentalization of the body. These two sequences show that the body is a medium of sense and signification, and it can replace language because it has a more visual impact and allows the projection of interpretations on it.



(Photogram n°37, 2:13:05)



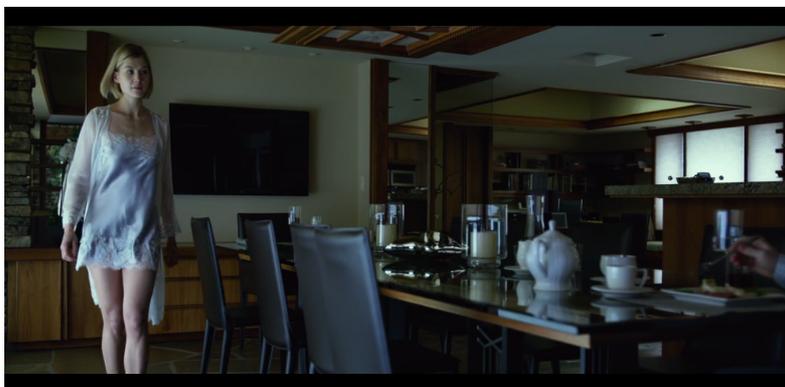
(Photogram n°38, 2:13:27)



(Photogram n°39, 2:13:25)

Amy's use of her own body seems to indicate the extent of her supra-consciousness even to the issues of representation because she controls the two founding elements of this dialectics of representation: the body and the gaze. This is why the movie also puts on display a shift from the erotic object to the status of erotic subject.

Laura Mulvey explains it in basic terms: “Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen”.⁶⁸ This process occurs in the scene of Desi's murder, where Amy plays with her status of erotic object to prevent Desi and the spectators from seeing the future development of the action. The fact that she plays with her position as an erotic object and that she is conscious of the “to-be-looked-at” process that she is undergoing makes her an active entity and she is rather an erotic subject. She is the one choosing when she wants to expose her body or to be seen, and she does not display her body for nothing. When she walks around Desi taking his breakfast (cf. Photograms 40a and 40b) she is an erotic subject because she tries to provoke the erotic contemplation: she assumes her status as an eroticized body and, like that, she takes back control of the situation and is an erotic subject who is in charge of what she shows or not, what the others can see or not.



68 Laura MULVEY, *Ibid.*

(Photogram n°40a, 1:59:11)



(Photogram n°40b, 1:59:12)

In this scene, the camera follows Amy while she is walking: at the beginning of the pan, she is shot in a full shot but at the end only her body remains in the frame. This camera movement exemplifies the eroticization of the female body and how it ends up being fragmented.



(Photogram n°41, 1:59:19)

In the photograms 41 and 42, Amy's status as an erotic object is obvious: Desi's gaze leads the spectator's gaze to Amy's body only. It is a static shot where Amy is excluded as a real character: she is reduced to what Desi is looking at, which is her legs. The identification, that is the fact to provisionally assimilate the subjectivity or the vision of someone else, is more complete in the next shot, the spectator has to see through Desi's perspective, above his shoulder.



(Photogram n°42, 1:59:29)

But this eroticization is completely controlled by Amy, who uses the erotic contemplation of

Desi and the spectators of her body, in order to mislead them. As soon as Desi leaves, the rhythm of the editing gets faster and the close-ups of Amy's body are showing the realization of her plan. Which leads to think that she is not submitted to the passive position of an erotic object; she is rather an erotic subject because she is in control of her image and its perception. She uses against others her body that could be harmful or reductive for her and turns it into a power and a weapon. This can be called “toxic femininity”⁶⁹ and by this term, I mean a female that relies on her perceived status as a victim in order to push an agenda and who is well aware that her body is not seen in a neutral way.

The scene of the shower after she comes back home tends to prove that Amy's nudity does not always go along with the status of erotic object. Contrariwise, when she is in the shower with Nick, they are on an equal footing because they are both naked but their conversation and their nudity, symbolizing a moment of truth is more important .

Besides, she goes through a physical transformation that breaks from her usual erotic status as a female character in cinema. It can even be said that she goes through a process of “defeminization” in association with the critical way to be feminine and desirable in today's society in the sequence when she comes back in the narrative present of the movie. “Defeminization” can be as a physical transformation where the woman loses or chooses to abandon traditional feminine features praised by the patriarchal society.

Not only does this sequence break from the usual visual representation of women but it is even the opposite of the usual fetishization of female body parts. Amy seems to look at the camera through her sunglasses when she runs away from North Carthage, and so at the audience, and it is a challenging look that goes against the usual “to-be-looked-at-ness”.



(Photogram n°43, 1:06:07)

The fact that she is wearing sunglasses contributes to the idea that there is a filter between her and

69 Mary Ann DOANE, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film theory and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, 1991.

the other gazes at play; she does not look accessible like the usual reduction of female characters to the status of erotic objects would imply.

The sequence when Amy re-appears, changes her appearance and criticizes “cool girls” is mostly about a physical transformation (she cuts and dyes her hair smokes and eats a lot of junk food in a very short time) leading to a “defeminization” (cf. Photograms 44 and 45).



(Photogram n°44, 1:10:34)



(Photogram n°45, 1:11:24)

The moment when she throws pens out the car window can be seen as a refusal of the common expectations because the pens are either symbols of either femininity (pink and fluffy and soft), or marriage (the newly wed couple) or pregnancy (a stork carrying a baby). For that matter, this sequence is divided in two parts: before and after the transformation. Similar medium close-ups from the same camera angle are used to show the result of the transformation.



(Photogram n°46, 1:06:15)

This physical transformation and defeminization are achieved when a male gaze validates the fact that she no longer can be eroticized.



(Photogram n°47, 1:42:01)

Desi's gaze is this validating instance. In this shot, a slight low angle can be noticed and Amy's is just a floating head; the strong anchor point of the gaze is Desi's and he definitely is the authoritative figure judging Amy's femininity and desirability (cf. Photogram 47).

The dialectics of representation in *Gone Girl* focuses on the body and the gaze, and it is interesting to see how these two fundamental cinematographic components are treated. Which is striking is the fact that the key-challenge around the gaze and the body in this movie rests upon a tension between absence and presence. Jodie Melyon explains in her thesis on *Wanda* (1970, Foudnation for Filmmakers), *À nos amours* (1984, Gaumont) and *A Woman Under The Influence* (1974, Faces Music) that:

Le corps [...] trace le chemin (narratif) à suivre. « Le corps est un élément-clef de la structure du plan. Il est au centre ; au cœur des énergies, des discours, des attentions et de l'architecture de l'oeuvre dans sa globalité. Au centre ou premier plan, il détermine les coordonnées de l'image, sa profondeur et son ardeur » C'est la notion du « corps-pilier » évoquée par Nicole Brenez et qui sert de repère au spectateur.⁷⁰

The movies under study are not from the same era or geographical area (for *À nos amours* directed by Maurice Pialat), still, her statement on the role of body is relevant for *Gone Girl* where the body structures the whole story. It is truly a “corps-pilier” for the narrative structure and the question of the gaze is closely connected to the question of the body. At first, the problem is the absence of a body. At the end, it is the overwhelming presence of the body that is problematic, especially for Nick.

The body seen as a problematic element is brought up at the very beginning of *Gone Girl*, with the opening. Indeed, *Gone Girl* starts on a tension stemming from an opposition. The very first image of the movie is an extreme close-up of Amy's face with Nick's voice over. This extreme close-up of Amy presents her as an overwhelming presence, concentrates the attention on her and

⁷⁰ Jodie MELYON, in *Des corps sans cadre, le corps féminin comme forme autonome*, thesis, 2014, p.20

prepares the fact that her presence or absence will be determining for the rest of the story. The rest of the opening breaks from this image: it is composed of long or extreme long shots of empty spaces. These shots show places like streets, beach, gardens, storefronts abandoned by any human presence. The dual theme of absence/presence is emphasized in a very subtle way with the names of the actors slowly disappearing, like vanishing on screen which recalls the title "*Gone Girl*". The camera is ethereal because of its great fluidity implied by the use of a steadicam.

During the first part of the film, Amy's body is only present through flashbacks and the voice-over but what is interesting is the numerous extreme close-ups of her diary and its importance in the story, a true substitute for Amy's presence. Detective Rhonda Boney underlines the importance of the presence or absence of the body: she explains to Nick "No blood and no body suggest kidnapping. Tells us to look for people outside of the house. Pool of blood and no body? Suggests homicide and tells us to look at people inside the house".

The absence of Amy's body creates a hole in the story, compensated with police hypotheses, rumors from the media and the neighbors, interpretations from the audience. If Amy does not appear in the first part of the movie, it is because it is necessary for her and the plot that her absence creates a hole, a void that intradiegetic characters and members of the audience scurry to fill out.

The role of media in the dialectics of representation in Gone Girl

The eventual presence or the absence of the body becomes a canvas for the huge media machine that draws upon it story after story and using common fears and clichés as pigments. Mass media are turned into a proper medium of representation within the movie itself because they create new images and stories, and they filter the facts and elements. By media and by extension "mass media", I refer to all devices, especially technical and audiovisual devices, that allow communication and that process and evaluate information.

It is striking to notice that the media are very present throughout the film, the audiovisual media in particular, and it is embodied through journalists, reporters, cameramen. At the beginning of the film, media are seen from afar: they are a distant body that comments the situation. But gradually, they become more and more present and influential. At the end, they turned into an oppressive presence, especially for Nick and Margo: the media machine, embodied by these journalists and cameramen, does not have any specific faces, it is just represented as a crowd led by the fierce Ellen Abbott. They are presented as something from the exterior that tries to slip inside, like it can be seen in photogram n°50: as Margo and Tanner Bolt walk to Nick's house, the horde of

journalists follow them in the same movement towards the house and the frame within the frame created by the doorway is the only barrier between them.



(Photogram n°48, 00:57:06)



(Photogram n°49, 00:57:12)



(Photogram n°50, 1:35:51)

The fact that they are following Nick and Margo several times gives the impression of a predator. In terms of gaze and representation, the spectator, influenced by the media's haste, becomes himself a predator: in the scene in which Nick gives a speech during the vigil for Amy, he brusquely leaves and he is followed, almost hunted by dozens of journalists and cameramen. The spectator becomes one of the hunters or predators through a point of view shot of Nick: the camera is shaky and nervous, as if it was held by a journalist, and goes after Nick running away (cf. Photogram 49).



(Photogram n°51, 00:25:17)

In this last photogram, the representation of the media as a quite oppressive presence and as a surveillance regime is obvious. The journalists, photographers, and cameramen form an indistinct crowd: Nick and his in-laws are in the foreground, crowned with the light of the camera. A symbolic dimension can be given to this image: the media here embodied by real persons cast a direct light on Nick and Amy's parents, and by extension on the current situation. In a way they are here to relate the truth but the light they are bringing on the situation is blinding and it shows in a symbolic way that the angle of analysis of the events is biased: it lets some information in the dark, enlighten others and dazzle the perception.

It is interesting because the media create a new level of reality and they are seen as a prime source to access the truth, as a genuine truth teller. They create a new narrative within the narrative relying on images: for example, the media use their influence and their own interpretation of images to prove that Nick is guilty or imply that he has an ambiguous relation with his twin sister. In a way, audiovisual media in *Gone Girl* own the gaze at certain times and use it to create a narrative within the narrative that strengthens Amy's plan. Finch explains that "News too is a social creation of representation, a stylized narrative, created to involve the viewers emotionally, to generate and maintain viewer attention. News, as Hallin and Mancini (1994) state, is "essentially cinematic"."⁷¹ Media in *Gone Girl* influence the dialectics of representation are skewed because information is treated as cinematographic plot twists and the only media shown in this movie are TV shows that combine sensationalism and false professional rigour. The point of view of the audience but also of the intradiegetic characters on Nick and Amy is directly influenced by their representation in the media and their representation is very fluctuating. For example, the media began to doubt Nick's innocence and Amy is presented as a victim then as an icon of domestic violence, then as a survivor and a living example of resilience and forgiveness, and finally Nick is presented as a loving and

71 Kurstin FINCH, *When She Was Bad: Framing Female Killers in Contemporary Film*, thesis, 1999, p.19

combative husband. The omnipresence of the media and the fact that they constitute at certain moments a transition and more particularly the link between times and places within the story contribute to put the media as a major medium of representation but it is a distorted mirror of reality. So the media hold a major place in the dialectics of representation because of two elements: it is a medium of representation and a surveillance regime that controls the gaze at the same time. It is a surveillance regime because they are everywhere and they exert a punishing control on the characters, especially Nick whose social image is scratched and who is condemned by the public opinion.

Challenging the gaze of the camera

It is now quite obvious that the dialectics of representation are complex in *Gone Girl* and both a strategic stake and a key issue. But above all, the dialectics of representation are dynamic and changing in this movie. This appropriation and diversion occur when the gaze of the camera and narration are challenged, mostly by Amy, through two elements : the idea of “active looking” or “active look” and the figure of the woman wearing glasses, both interacting.

The idea of “active looking” can be defined as an investigative, scrutating look that enrolls the spectator into the process of looking and makes him, in turn, become an active element. This notion of active looking is defined by the insistence on the act of seeing : who sees? What do they see and how? Who can see them? Besides, the woman is not a subject of the gaze anymore, she looks and the object of her gaze is visible for the audience. About the active looking of the female characters, Mary Ann Doane sums up the way the female gaze is generally characterized, especially in classic Hollywood narrative films : “Fascinated by nothing visible – a blankness or void for the spectator – unanchored by a “sight” (there is nothing 'proper' to her vision – save, perhaps, the mirror), the female gaze is left free-floating, vulnerable to subjection.”⁷²; we can see in *Gone Girl* that this passivity and blankness of the female gaze are not relevant and are replaced by an active looking.

In the following photograms, we can note that Amy's gaze is a strong axis in the composition of the image and a forceful element that gives hints or insinuates on Amy and Nick's relationship. Her gaze is carried by the designs on the ceiling that create vanishing lines converging to Nick (cf. Photogram 53a), and the substantial distance between them indicates the relation of distrust, mutual

⁷² Mary Ann DOANE, “Out of the Cinema and into the Streets: The Censorship of the Female Gaze”, cited in *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*, Patricia ERENS p.52

observation and hidden agenda that binds them. These shot-reverse shots illustrate the active looking that Amy adopts because, unlike Doane points it out in the case of the female gaze in classic Hollywood films, here the spectator has access to the object of Amy's gaze, there is no “free-floating” female gaze, it is rather a determined and confronting gaze that forces the spectator to adopt the same gaze as Amy by putting him behind her and then showing him Amy actively looking, even if her gaze is not always shown but suggested (cf. Photograms 52a to 53a).



(Photogram n°52a, 1:08:15)



(Photogram n°52b, 1:08:17)



(Photogram n°53a, 2:15:09)



(Photogram n°53b, 2:15:12)

In *Gone Girl*, the active look is also supported by the cinematographic mobility with all the camera movements. It has already been said earlier in this essay that Amy has a magnetic and centripetal force that guides the camera movements to her but these camera movements, and especially the tracking shots, cause the spectator to be actively looking because these camera movements lead to explore the space within the frame of the image.



(Photogram n°54, 0:34:51)

For example, the pan to the left in photogram 54 occurs before Nick even enters the room and looks at the persons present, so this particular camera movement cannot be associated with a POV shot from Nick's perspective: this aerial camera movement seems almost neutral because it is a very fluent and prompt movement (this sort of camera movement does not give the impression that someone is holding the camera) and allows the spectator to exert a active looking that analyzes the scene displayed.



(Photogram n°55a, 00:41:49)



(Photogram n°55b, 00:42:00)

In this tracking shot (cf. Photograms 55a and 55b), the idea of active looking is apparent because the spectator is invited through this slow and gradual camera movement on Amy to explore the house just like she does, to try to figure out what this place is just like Amy is trying to. The fact that the tracking shot begins with a close shot but ends on a close-up of her face, leaving the background and the environment dormant, reinforces the value of close-ups: the close-up here is a way for the camera to scrutinize Amy's face in order to try to solve the mystery of her disappearance and of her emotions, to go beyond the skin and the flesh. It involves the spectator into this active contemplation.

This notion of active looking is also embodied in the film through the figure of the woman wearing glasses: this uncommon figure carries a great symbolic and meaningful effect. According to Mary Ann Doane, women wearing glasses are one of the most intense visual clichés of the cinema because this figure refers to many highly problematic and significant questions, with a direct connection to the stakes of representation, such as repressed sexuality, knowledge, visibility and vision, intellectuality and desire, and at the same time, this figure condenses these motifs.⁷³ So the representation of a woman putting on some glasses is far from being a meaningless gesture: in *Gone Girl*, it even marks a transition and insists on the idea that the dialectics of representation rests

⁷³ Mary Ann DOANE, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film theory and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, 1991, p.27

upon a reappropriation and diversion of the gaze. Besides, the double implication or consequences of this act are also noteworthy: it underpins the fact that the recovery of sight goes hand in hand with the acknowledgment of a flaw in vision.

The scene where Amy puts on some glasses occurs just after the revelation of her faked death so it is directly linked to this plot twist. In terms of representation, we go from a rather physically absent Amy (even if she is omnipresent through voice-overs and the stories she is making the intradiegetic characters and the spectators believe) to an empowered Amy. The close-up of Amy putting some glasses on comes at the end of Amy's transition and criticism of the “cool girl” stereotype, it exemplifies the idea that she recovered her eyesight, she is not blind anymore: it is the sign of her awakening (cf. Photograms 56 and 57).



(Photogram n°56, 1:11:12)



(Photogram n°57, 1:11:13)

In this scene, a potential vision deficiency is not the reason of the presence of glasses. She is alone in the frame, her environment is not the cause of her suddenly wearing glasses, it is not because she cannot see the world around her that she starts wearing glasses: the fact that she is alone in this shot seems to imply that this act is more personal and linked to an individual awakening. Besides, it takes part in a process of “defeminization” and “undesirability” evoked earlier by Doane⁷⁴ for the case of classic Hollywood narrative films: a woman with glasses appears less attractive and in this

⁷⁴ Mary Ann DOANE, in “Film and the Masquerade: theorising the female spectator”, *screen.oxfordjournals.org*, Screen n°23(3-4) (September-October 1982), pp. 74-87.

scene, the glasses are one of the signifiers of unattractiveness along with eating junk food (cf. Photogram 58), no make up, unappealing hair color, slack clothes (cf. Photogram 61) and display of menstrual products (cf. Photogram 59).



(Photogram n°58, 1:10:43)



(Photogram n°59 1:11:09)



(Photogram n°60, 1:11:20)

Moreover, a woman with glasses becomes a potential threat because it implies the woman's appropriation of the gaze: she is looking actively and for once, she sees and she is not seen. Basically, a woman wearing glasses suggests she is trying to see but the problem is that to see violates the traditional expectations placed upon women: a woman's main role is to be seen above all, especially by the male spectator through the male gaze, and if she tries to see for herself, she is rebelling against this convention. But while Laura Mulvey stated in her essay that the typical conclusion for women who defy this expectation and see through their glasses in classic Hollywood

narrative films is punishment (they are reformed or they die) at the end of the film, in *Gone Girl* Amy is not doomed to the same fate: defying the convention by seeing through her glasses only grants her a active looking and more power. To quote Mary Ann Doane about this equation “woman with glasses = potential threat”,

The intellectual woman looks and analyzes, and in usurping the gaze she poses a threat to an entire system of representation. It is as if a woman had forcefully moved to the other side of the specular. The overdetermination of the image of woman with glasses, its status as a cliché, is a crucial aspect of the cinematic alignment of structures of seeing and being seen with sexual difference.⁷⁵

Her active looking is associated with a manipulation of the gaze: the scene where she comes home in blood-stained clothes is a good example because she both forces the gaze of the camera to follow her during quite a long pan and she manipulates the gaze of the media by meticulously choosing what they can see or not.

The notion of manipulation is structuring and vital in *Gone Girl*: the story is about Amy manipulating Nick, the media, the intradiegetic characters, and the spectators. But she is not the only authoritative figure who controls and manipulates, it can be said that the whole movie is built around and upon this notion of manipulation.

75 Mary Ann DOANE, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film theory and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, 1991, p.27

III/ A narrative structure resting on a trilateral base: power, knowledge, and manipulation

A manipulative narrative

The idea that the whole movie is structured around manipulation and its derivative tools has to be moderated and nuanced: indeed manipulation is crucial for the story and conducts the characters' behaviors and postures but it fits in a larger and more extended organization of the film. *Gone Girl* is organized around three poles that interweave, confront or support each other throughout the movie: power, knowledge, and manipulation. The narrative structure rests upon this trilateral base and gains in efficiency thanks to this structure.

Amy is a disturbing character and she appears as the obvious and visible tip of the manipulative process in progress during the movie. But the manipulative character of the narrative structure itself does not have to be occulted by the single character of Amy. The motif of imprisonment is a metaphor of this manipulation that the spectators and the characters undergo. Indeed, the most visible presence of this motif is through the composition of the image itself at first and the image carries therefore a symbolical dimension. When I evoke the presence of the motif of imprisonment through the image, my analysis will be based on the study of the composition and the *mise-en-scène* within the image.

The idea of imprisonment is subtly implied within the image through the use of the environment or the camera angle: for example, photogram 61 corresponds to the first time Nick and Amy meet, and leaving together the party they separately attended, they use a somewhat old elevator. In this photogram, the bars behind them cut the image, neutralize any deep focus, form a sort of cage that secludes them from the rest of the world. The static and close shot and the lack of deep focus cause the impression for the spectator of being cornered with them in the elevator and the slight slow angle puts the spectator in the position of an intrusive witness. Besides, this moment in the film encapsulates the forthcoming romantic relationship between Nick and Amy, because it shows that from the beginning the couple lives their relation isolated and that their amorous commotion is influenced by the idea of imprisonment.



(Photogram n°61, 00:05:33)

This kind of image where the perspective is impeded by obstacles that remind of prison bars and where the characters seem to be trapped or confined is recurrent. The details are subtle: it can be a thin grid on a glass wall (cf. Photogram 62) or the prison bars (cf. Photograms 63, 64, 65) that block the spectator's gaze and puts him in the position of a witness of the privacy of Nick and Amy. Frames within the frame also plays an important role: the image seems “closed”, limited and the characters are trapped within parts of the image and restrained in their actions; the attention of the spectator is irresistibly drawn to them (cf. Photogram 66, 67, 68). These three elements, grid on a glass wall, prison bars or frames within the frame, act as symbols of the trap or imprisonment that the characters undergo, and it is symptomatic of the manipulative narrative.



(Photogram n°62, 00:15:04)



(Photogram n°63, 00:28:40)



(Photogram n°64, 1:28:31)



(Photogram n°65, 1:28:39)



(Photogram n°66, 00:45:43)



(Photogram n°67, 00:48:48)



(Photogram n°68, 00:48:53)

Some particular moments during the film cross-reference this idea of imprisonment, as the direct objective result of the manipulation exerted. The scenes and actions in themselves refer to this idea : for example when Nick and Margo get out of custody, besides the fact that they are physically trapped in their lawyer's car, the perspective is clogged by the faces of all the journalists and prying eyes (cf. Photogram 69). The camera multiplies the takes of that imprisonment, which corresponds to the moment when Amy's plan is about to get Nick convicted, alternating between close shots in the car and overground long shots to show the situation from two intimidating angles.



(Photogram n°69 , 2:02:10)

The scene of the final interview with Ellen Abbott expresses the idea that the manipulation succeeded and led to a situation where Nick ends up trapped. It is one of the last images of the film, Nick and Amy go public on national television about their marriage and marital hardship before announcing that they are becoming parents. The interview is a succession of shots-reverse shots between Ellen Abbott and the couple, the camera adopts more or less the same point of view as the television camera but at the end of the scene, there is no more distancing effect or difference between the two of them: the logo from Ellen Abbott's show "Ellen Abbott Exclusive" appears at the right bottom of the picture meaning in a way that fiction reaches reality. Indeed, the story Amy invented becomes reality through the medium of television, it becomes the only version of the truth and the camera is materialising this transformation: the last image the spectator has access to is the

one filtered by the camera, the camera gaze turns into a media gaze: the spectator does not have anymore the privilege of a strategic insight position; he is extraneous whereas from the beginning of the film he was closely following Amy and Nick in their intimacy. Nick is trapped in the frame within the frame, a symbol of his imprisonment into his marriage and into a false version of the story against which he cannot do anything (cf. Photogram 70). The same applies for the spectator who is relegated to an external position and has access to a false story. The motif of imprisonment is directly connected to the manipulative feature of the narrative, supported in some aspects by Amy.



(Photogram n°70, 2:24:12)

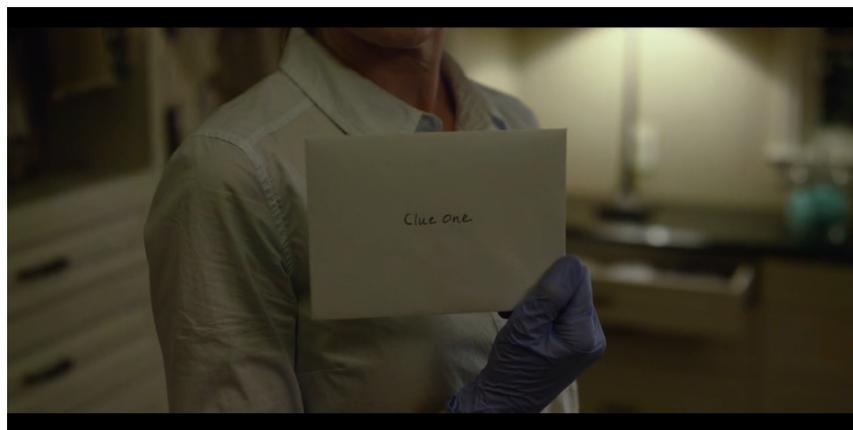
Another manifestation of the manipulative narrative characterizing *Gone Girl* is the constant reference to games and the fact that it constitutes the red wire of the narrative and a cornerstone of the narrative structure. Indeed, David Fincher loves to integrate or to build his movies on games⁷⁶ and *Gone Girl* is no exception to the rule. Like subtle winks, David Fincher reunites in the first minutes of the movie Nick and his twin sister Margo at The Bar in an ironic and bitter-sweet scene where Nick brings back a “Mastermind” game (cf. Photogram n°71) and they play a game named “The Game of Life”.



(Photogram n°71, 00:02:40)

⁷⁶ *The Game* (PolyGram Fimed Entertainment, 1997), *Fight Club* (20th Century Fox, 1999), *Zodiac* (Warner Bros, 2007), *Seven* (New Line Camera, 1995) are perfect examples of Fincher's peculiarity: riddles, hide and seek, bets, treasure quests, investigations punctuate and constitute the stories and/or structures of these movies, and are the first steps to explore human nature and other issues.

But it truly begins with a treasure quest (Amy dispersing hints and clues to lead Nick to his anniversary present and to trick the police into thinking that Nick is guilty). At certain times, the treasure quest organized by Amy for Nick and the police investigation seem to be fusing: the first hint Nick received is named “Clue One” and the police discovers it (cf. Photogram 72). By the way, a quick tilt down at the moment when Rhonda Boney shows the letter to the camera connects directly the police to this “clue” which is originally an element from Amy's treasure hunt. Then, in the scene where Nick goes to his dad's house following the riddle he deciphered earlier, he finds another envelope but it is the police that finds later the real clue, Amy's diary. Moreover, at the beginning of the movie, flashbacks of their annual treasure hunt are used to chart the early moments of Nick and Amy's romantic relationship.



(Photogram n°72, 00:23:53)

But it is also in a way a giant hide and seek because Amy tries to erase her tracks and hide while Nick and his lawyer are looking for her. The relation between Nick and the media also looks like a game of hide-and-seek: Nick tries to avoid them and to hide from them while the media is tracking him.



(Photogram n°73, 1:50:42)

The recurrence of the motif of the game stands for a metaphor of the manipulative narrative.

Yet, and this is the most appealing part in the study of *Gone Girl* as a manipulative narrative, this manipulation of the spectators and of the characters consists in a plurality and diversity of the narrative tools (and how the focalization influences it), and in the use of images. Indeed, this diversity contributes to the manipulation of the spectator in particular because it multiplies the leads, points of view and information in order to lose him.

In classical Hollywood cinema, a presupposition prevails in the spectator's perceptions but can also be applied to *Gone Girl* (even if it is a contemporary movie): “In the classical Hollywood text, knowledge is generally supported by the image, which ultimately acts as a guarantee of the reality-effect of the film. Individual characters may lie, but the image does not”⁷⁷. Doane points out here that the way narration and focalization are handled and treated in a film can subvert the presupposition that the image does not lie and can influence the spectator's perception. Indeed, the image is perceived as an entity that does not lie but in *Gone Girl*, the spectator is misled by it and there is an on-going process to mislead the intradiegetic characters too. The spectators realize that an image can lie and trick them. Whereas the notions of mimesis (as the act of simply showing in imitating or reproducing) and diegesis (as the act of telling a story) are often mistaken, their difference is clear here: mimesis only copies and shows while diegesis modifies and arranges because it tells a story. The manipulation through the image in *Gone Girl* comes from the diversity of the types of image displayed. Indeed, the movie uses the form of images produced by the media or security cameras for example and we can witness how the manipulation of images works. Photograms 74 and 75 illustrate this process: photogram 74 corresponds to the first press conference about Amy's disappearance. The moment when Nick smiles in front of the giant picture of his wife is just a fleeting glimpse and he is just obeying a journalist shouting to him “Smile!”. The spectator witnesses that moment, which is more akin to a blunder, and can see a different facet of it when this image is reshuffled by the media (cf. Photogram 75).



(Photogram n°74, 00:26:53)

⁷⁷ Colin MCCABE, “Realism and the Cinema: notes on some Brechtian theses” in *Screen*, summer 74, vol.15, no 2, pp.17-18, quoted by Mary Ann DOANE, in *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, 1991, p.116



(Photogram n°75, 00:51:34)

Whereas the first part of this film plays with the credulity and innocence of the spectator, he gradually understands that images can lie and can represent whatever the person manipulating them wants to mean or reflect. The best example is the scene in Desi's house, where security camera images are used to manipulate the gaze and the story. The spectator sees reality, that is Amy is faking a sexual assault, and can consider the discrepancy with the final result which are the security camera images.



(Photogram n°76, 2:01:07)



(Photogram n°77, 2:00:35)

The spectator has to make his way through all the lies and the manipulation to get access to the truth. The usual main streams of informations for the spectators are distorted and no longer a reliable way to interpret the images. The beginnings of *Gone Girl* are built around a constant

interweaving of the present where Nick faces his wife's disappearance and seems guilty, and the past with flashbacks about the evolution of the couple, narrated by Amy through her diary. Photogram 79 illustrates how the homodiegetic narration and the internal focalization⁷⁸ build a manipulative narrative assisted by images. Thus, the sequence begins with Amy's voice-over describing from her point of view a few critical and intense moments in her couple timeline. A close-up of her hand writing in her diary indicates that it is a flash back. Her voice describes and guides the actions on screen. The voice-over is extremely important, it is a key element in this idea of a manipulative narrative because it is questioned at no point and so it stands for a certain and reliable source. The voice-over of Amy invoking, provoking, and accompanying the flashbacks is accepted as a source of truth but in reality creates the manipulative narrative. The voice-over encourages the spectator to identify with Amy, and the combination of the editing and the composition makes the moment more striking and dramatic. Indeed, the moment when Nick pushes Amy on the ground is intersected by fades to black with loud and metallic noises, giving a dramatic and intense dimension to this action. On photogram 78, we can see that the high angle puts the spectator in a position of a judge who watches from above, and the stairs create a perspective line that draws attention to Nick standing and Amy lying. These three elements combined (the voice-over, the editing and the composition) forces the spectator to be emotional and stand up for Amy but later in the movie, it is revealed that the diary is a fake and so most of the moments recorded in there are not true. This sequence is an example of how manipulative can the narrative be for the spectator and which techniques it uses.



(Photogram n°78, 00:46:44)

Voice-overs are usually a key-element in cinema to comment, describe, add some information, decipher or influence the spectator. Narrators are perceived as authoritative figures who hold the truth. Even if it is not always the case and that there are exceptions to the rule, in *Gone*

78 Gérard Genette, a French structuralist theoretician who tackles in his essay *Figures III* concepts of narratology such as homodiegetic or heterodiegetic narration, internal or external focalization. Homodiegetic narration means that the narrator who tells a story in which he is also a character and internal focalization means that the narration is handled from a subjective point of view: descriptions are based on the narrator's experiences and feelings.

Girl, the voice-over first presents itself as a way to access the truth along with the flash-backs. Amy's voice-over and the flash-backs are guarantees of truth but it is interesting to see that when Amy's mask comes off, when she reveals she is not dead at all and when the voice-over is not subjected to the diary anymore, she addresses the spectator directly (“You know what's hard? Faking a pregnancy.” or “You think I'd let him destroy me and end up happier than ever?”), destroying by this way the 4th wall⁷⁹ and ending up the masquerade created by the manipulative narrative. This idea of masquerade is present also through the object of the diary: normally seen as a private space to write down deep feelings, everyday life anecdotes and dark secrets, in *Gone Girl*, it is removed from its traditional purpose and becomes a fictional tool to manipulate. The police is like the spectators but they are a little bit late: when the police reads Amy's diary, the spectator already knows that its content aims to manipulate and hurt Nick but for the police, it is a solid proof of Nick's guilt. Which is interesting is the fact that Amy's diary blurs lines between what is true and what is fiction, she mingles true elements from real life and elements from her imagination. Furthermore, Detective Boney hands Amy's diary to Nick and asks him “Do you want to play true or false?” after she arrested him because they discovered the diary and the woodshed.

The position of the spectator has been evoked earlier: he is primarily a witness from within. But he is not limited to this sole position, he is submitted to a tension provoked by the narrative structure.

The position of the spectator in this trilateral formation: between ignorance and power

What is interesting is the fact that this manipulative narrative structure creates multiple tensions within the film. These tensions are directly connected to the trilateral formation of knowledge, power, and manipulation forming the structuring line of the movie.

This trilateral base resting on the notions of manipulation, power, and knowledge mostly frames Nick and Amy's relationship but it also applies to the other characters. For example, Amy knows, she is the one who planned everything so it grants her power and the ability to manipulate Nick and the police during the investigation. At the beginning, Nick has information but he does not know the whole story, so his power is partial and incomplete and he gets to manipulate Amy through his television interview only when he understands her motives and so has access to some knowledge. The case of the media is interesting as regards to this pattern of a trilateral base because

⁷⁹ The 4th Wall is a concept theorized by the French philosopher Denis Diderot. The 4th Wall is an imaginary wall separating the audience from the actors. The audience can see the performance of the actors on stage but with this tacit understanding, the actors remain in their characters and pretend to not see the audience.

they do not have concrete knowledge but they manage to turn speculations into real and credible information: it is the manifestation of their power and, by this process, they gain even more power and can manipulate public opinion.

Thus, Amy seems to stand at the center of this trilateral configuration because she controls the information and revelations in the film, through the voice-over and the flashbacks. She is the cause of the plot twist at the middle of the film, when we discover that she is well alive and she provokes many revelations like the discovery of her diary in the wood-burning stove or the presents in the woodshed. But what is truly interesting is the fact that the narration plays with the spectator himself; especially it plays with the tension caused by the discrepancy between his ignorance and his feeling of power given by his supposed grasp of the situation. Indeed, the narration, assumed by Amy, derives satisfaction from playing with the spectator and giving him the feeling that he knows, when in fact a paucity of major information affects his judgment. The film itself seems to play with one of the cinematographic illusions and Amy appears to take advantage of it. Indeed, Laura Mulvey evokes it but in the specific case of the male gaze with the spectator's scopophilia and voyeuristic phantasy for the female body⁸⁰:

At first glance, the cinema would seem to be remote from the undercover world of the surreptitious observation of an unknowing and unwilling victim. What is seen on the screen is so manifestly shown. But the mass of mainstream film, and the conventions within which it has consciously evolved, portray a hermetically sealed world which unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience, producing for them a sense of separation and playing on their voyeuristic phantasy. Moreover, the extreme contrast between the darkness in the auditorium (which also isolates the spectators from one another) and the brilliance of the shifting patterns of light and shade on the screen helps to promote the illusion of voyeuristic separation. Although the film is really being shown, is there to be seen, conditions of screening and narrative conventions give the spectator an illusion of looking in on a private world. Among other things, the position of the spectators in the cinema is blatantly one of repression of their exhibitionism and projection of the repressed desire onto the performer.⁸¹

In this quote, there are two key ideas to notice in order to understand the tension between ignorance and power that characterizes the spectator's position: "*What is seen on the screen is so manifestly shown.*" and "*Although the film is really being shown, is there to be seen, conditions of screening and narrative conventions give the spectator an illusion of looking in on a private world.*". Here, Mulvey underlines a slight paradox or one of the founding illusion of cinema: what

80 Since the relation of Amy with the traditional male gaze has been evoked earlier in this essay in the context of the idea of Amy's supraconsciousness, especially in the sections about Amy as an almighty figure and about the dialectics of representation, the use of Mulvey's quote will not linger on the issue of the male gaze, even if it is a major point in Mulvey's argumentation.

81 Laura MULVEY, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, Oxford University Press, 1999. She theorizes the notion of scopophilia in cinema. Scopophilia (or scopic drive) is basically the pleasure to look, the visual pleasure. Scopophilia implies the controlling and scrutating perception of persons as objects of pleasure.

is shown on screen is not innocently shown, it is caused by a manifest intent to show it, and this illusion satisfies the scopic drive and voyeurist pleasure of the spectator who needs to scrutinize and observe an “unknowing or unwilling” character with whom he cannot interact. There is also a desire to show, a choice of the image, a film is not an meaningless object. But the spectator in the dark movie theatre becomes emotionally involved and forgets about where he is and who he is in front of this visual artwork, and he has the impression of leaching into a private world. And this position gives him pleasure because it is associated to power. *Gone Girl* seems to play with that memory lapse, this projection of the spectator onto the screen. *Gone Girl* has a striking approach because this movie, through the narration and the conventions of looking, uses the paradox of manifestly showing while giving the impression to the spectator that he is seeing things he should not, to manipulate him. For example, the first part of the movie endeavors to put the spectator in a supposed powerful position: the audience knows more than the media or even the police for two reasons. First, the spectator is a privileged witness thanks to the flashbacks and Amy's voice-over giving him information bit by bit: unlike the police, the journalists, or even the close relatives, he sees the situation from within and he enters her intimacy thanks to her voice and point of view (cf. Photograms 79, 80 and 81).



(Photogram n°79 1:09:30)



(Photogram n° 80, 00:46:56)



(Photogram n°81, 00:49:00)

But the spectator has also access to information given out of Amy's perspective or side of the story. For example, he can observe by himself (especially in the first half of the movie) and have an advantage on the other characters in the film but he does not realize right away that in fact these informations are only confirming Amy's side of the story (cf. Photograms 82 and 83).



(Photogram n°82, 00:19:54)



(Photogram n°83, 00:42:47)

The film exploits the voyeuristic position of the spectator and his scopophilic pleasure by giving him the beneficial position of an observer looking at “an unknowing and unwilling victim”⁸² (who changes throughout the movie: in the first part, Amy is the victim but after the disclosure of her noon-death, Nick becomes the victim). This is a superior but in fact unsteady position, because

82 Laura MULVEY, *ibid.*

the spectator is abused by his voyeurism and his scopophilia. The information he has access to are biased and distorted, and the trickery is revealed when Amy re-appears on screen: he understands that the power he thought he had on the intradiegetic characters is irrelevant because it was a lie. The second part of the movie is the real moment when the spectator is in a position where he knows, where his critical mind is sharpened but he has to share this power provided by the revelations with Nick, Margo, the lawyer, and Detective Boney. Yet, it must be underlined that the spectator does not lose the entirety of the power and knowledge he thought he had since he is the chosen intermediary of Amy when she describes in great details her plan and its accomplishment. In fact, he is the only one to know exactly her mobile and the way she proceeded because she describes it with lots of details in the scene where she reveals she is not dead, just missing.

“All the world's a stage...”: the value of staging in Gone Girl

Studying the position of the spectator in *Gone Girl* enables to see that the idea of staging plays a significant part and that the narration and even the narrative structure are all about staging. By staging or *mise-en-scène*, I mean the orchestration of all elements in order to invent, create and make a story plausible. *Mise-en-scène* handles every detail and ensures the smooth functioning of the performance.

This idea of staging is connected to the trilateral base formed by the notions of power, knowledge, and manipulation as well as being at its center. Staging occurs through two manifestations during the movie. First, it is quite obvious that the narrative structure rests on a quite elaborated and wicked staging. The film begins with a treasure hunt, which is in a way a sophisticated *mise-en-scène*. Moreover, a *mise-en-scène* implies a preparation, a prior setting up and this is precisely a process described by Amy when she prepares the crime scene (cf. Photogram 84, 85, 86, 87). Staging requires paying attention to every detail in order that the performance promptly unfolds, and the narrative structure rests on the good execution of this *mise-en-scène*.



(Photogram n°84, 00:30:23)



(Photogram n°85, 1:08:29)



(Photogram n°86, 1:08:50)



(Photogram n°87, 1:09:49)

This idea of staging also affects Amy's body which is turned into a spectacle several times. The most blatant manifestations of it occur when Amy finds a way to get out of Desi's house but also when she comes home covered in blood. Indeed, during this episode, Amy stages her own body, she turns it into a visible mark of what she went through and her own body tells a story. The process of preparation is obviously shown to the spectator (cf. Photograms 17a, 17b, 17c and 35), during this moment it can be said that he is present backstage with Amy, then he witnesses the performance (cf. Photograms 25, 89 to 90d, and 92) and finally he observes the transition in the

shower when Amy washes the blood off her body and it is like she is taking off her costume (cf. Photograms 37, 38, 39).

In this case, staging is to be linked to theatricality. Amy, by staging her own body and considering her plan as a *mise-en-scène*, creates a relation stage director/actor, especially with Nick. This idea of theatricality is particularly at stake when Amy comes home covered in blood. Amy and Nick meet up in front of their house used as a scenery before an audience composed of journalists, TV cameras and onlookers, in a sarcastic and dark imitation of the traditional reunion between lovers from romantic comedies. A gap appears between the foreground (Amy and Nick acting) and the background (the audience) that is between reality and performance, between what the spectator sees and what the media see, as photograms 88c and 88d illustrate, because the camera is situated behind Nick and Amy, breaking by this way the illusion. For once, the camera does not let the spectator being misled about what he sees: the camera takes, whether it is long shot, medium long shot or close shot, always play with the depth of field to include the diegetic audience constituted by the journalists and passerbys in the background and when the camera pans over and moves away, the diegetic audience is still present like a small reminder that this scene is mainly about a confrontation, a fight and not a happy reunion (cf. Photograms 88, 89a and 89b).



(Photogram n°88, 2:06:00)



(Photogram n°89a, 2:06:13)



(Photogram n°89b, 2:06:21)



(Photogram n°89c, 2:06:25)



(Photogram n°89d, 2:06:29)

Another scene is quite eloquent in terms of theatricality and performance: the scene when Amy is at the hospital and a real audience composed of police inspectors is questioning her. Indeed, just the composition and the lighting create a scenery like a theatre play. In photograms 89d and 90, it is visible that the image is divided in two like in a theater or in a movie theater: there is Amy on one side and an audience silently watching her facing her; there is a gap between the audience and the actors. She is enhanced by a direct and white light that puts her in the position of a lead role while the doctors are like secondary roles and the others remain in the dark. All the gazes are concentrated on her, but just like the scene of the reunion, a distance is established to break the

illusion and reveal the staging process. This distance is provoked by the fact that the spectator knows by now, he cannot fall for Amy's performance: he is now a sort of judge and witness of her performances, he knows when she lies or tells the truth, he can measure how convincing her performances are.

Here it is the subtle spot of light on Detective Boney conferring her a sort of aura, as a symbol of her suspicion. Besides, she allows herself to talk and asks direct questions, which disturbs Amy's performance (cf. Photogram 90).



(Photogram n°90, 2:07:08)



(Photogram n°91, 2:07:14)

Hence, Amy is an actress, she is performing in front of others: she plays the victim, the perfect wife, the cool girl, the survivor, Nancy. But she is also a stage director when it comes to Nick. The reunion scene shows that she is not leaving him any option, she embarks him in her performance and at the same time in her madness: on photogram 89b, she seeks refuge in his arms but he breaks the theatrical convention by not entering in his part right away and saying to her “You fucking bitch”. But she forces him to perform anyway with her by falling in his arms to create a vivid image for the audience like photogram 89c shows it. But we can see in photograms 89c, 92 and 93 that Nick plays her game: in a way he becomes her puppet. The camera makes it obvious for the spectator, it institutes a distance, in the same way Nick distances himself from the role he has to play. Photogram 95 reveals that it is truly a convincing performance for the media but that everything is fake, even the kiss.



(Photogram n°92, 2:11:40)



(Photogram n°93, 2:11:46)



(Photogram n°94, 2:11:47)



(Photogram n°95, 2:16:11)

At first, Nick is directed by Amy without his consent: he realizes it in the middle of the film when he exclaims to Margo that the morning of their anniversary, he intended to ask for divorce but instead Amy recommended him to go for a walk and think, and that she knew where he would go (alone at the beach) and that, in this way, he would not have any alibi when she would be gone. But at the end, he is aware of being managed and in a way accepts it like Margo points out crying “You wanna stay with her?”.

This idea of staging has a direct impact on the power-based relationship developing throughout the film. These power-based relation and power struggle between Nick and Amy are staged in a theatrical way and constitute a key element in the narrative structure. This struggle for power occurs on both the public and private dimensions and these two spheres interact with each other. The several *mises-en-scène* which the spectators are witnessing can be considered in many ways as a *mise en abyme* of the intrinsic manipulative character of the narrative structure. They act as warnings for the spectators because a distance is most of time created: at the end of the film, when the spectators gain a more sharpened and critical gaze on these *mises-en-scène*, they realize that the film through its narrative structure misled and fooled them earlier. It is interesting to observe the position in which *Gone Girl* puts the spectator, who is at the same time active and passive, duped and aware. This is not a movie meant to leave the spectator indifferent: just like Amy drives Nick to his limits and forces him to react, this movie tests its audience and attempts to affect them.

CONCLUSION

When it was first released, *Gone Girl* stirred up many strong and vivid reactions and, in the end, the debate was not on its potential cinematographic quality or its well-constructed narrative, but on its sociological impact and gender representations, whether it was hurtful or diminishing for men or women. The analysis of this particular visual object that is *Gone Girl* took account of these considerations but it seemed to me that since movies are above all cultural constructions and outputs and consequently prone to be interpreted and valued differently depending on the person watching. Though, the gender studies approach may confer in some aspects a sociological dimension to this study and subject.

The analysis of the character of Amy Dunne as a female murderer and, so, as a subversive figure allows to show the several transgressions that determine this movie. Indeed, Amy is an interesting subject who proposes a reflection on stereotypes, gender representations, but also questions of power and resistance. She is the major component of this film, she exercises a strong control on the narration and on the narrative structure, and she brings another perspective to the contemporary research on female characters in cinema. She resists to most of the categorizations or reductions that cinematographic female characters can endure: on the contrary she plays with clichés and usual representations. The control and influence she has are not limited to the only field of characterization; she is also a disturbing element in the questions of gaze. The concept of supra-consciousness that I introduced in this essay emphasizes the fact that she is an enthralling object of study.

This movie is also a prominent object of study in terms of representation and gaze, and position and role of the spectator, because it pushes to its limits the scopic drive and voyeurism and develops a vast manipulation that articulates the entire narrative structure. A *mise en abyme* can be perceived within the film and its structure: the fact that the first part of the movie gives the impression to the spectator that he has a privileged position that allows him to navigate between public and private spheres and to hold an almost omniscient gaze before taking it from him in the second part and letting him realize the manipulation he underwent, is striking. It creates a tension: the spectator's gaze is duped, diverted, false information are handed over to him but all things considered, he still has a unique position and is forced to react and to be active.

This essay did not linger on the criticism of society that the film instigates in particular with the depiction of the media machine. Nevertheless, the media are an important element for the analysis, especially in the question of gaze and *mise-en-scène*. They influence the narrative by

creating a secondary narrative and they constitute a manipulative power.

Obviously, the study of the depiction of media in this movie would have provided an interesting aspect to this analysis because it would have made this essay explore the relation between cinema and media and add a historical and civilisational dimension of the analysis. But it seemed more relevant to focus on the media as the “fourth power”⁸³ and as a manipulative machine in terms of representation and narrative.

The couple Nick/Amy gives an interesting insight and application of power-based relations between men and women in our modern western society because one of the main narrative arcs is the struggle to control the other or resist, and it echoes feminist and sociological reflections on patriarchy and oppression. *Gone Girl* is not only a revenge story, there are other stakes at play: it is a sort of race to power, it is about control and power, especially in marriage in this case.

Even if it was not the subject of this study, it can be said that *Gone Girl* is not a hiatus in David Fincher's filmography: this movie differentiates itself from his previous movies through the extreme, non-standard and frightening female figure of Amy, but it concentrates recurring themes and key subjects such as the dissection of Evil and perversity, the struggle for existence, the omnipresence of deceptive appearances, games, and mental and physical imprisonment, bewilderment of the spectator. Yet, *Gone Girl* and this specific female lead character are a first occurrence in David Fincher's work because it is the first time that Fincher explores perversity and the idea of Evil through a female character.

This character fully belongs to the category of “cinematographic monsters” that David Fincher seems to be fond of, because more than just a representation of a non-standard character, there is the question of the medium itself used for this representation. A non-standard character and especially the character of a female murderer can be understood as monsters because they overstep the norm and common laws. The word “monster” comes from “monstrum” that has at its source the word “mostrare” and that means “show, display”⁸⁴. Hence, there is a specific link between the etymology of “monster” and visual arts and questions of representation and perception. Besides, a monster refers to ancient Greek notions of “hybris” and “catharsis” and Amy certainly has a cathartic effect: her radical and excessive nature leads the spectator to purge the passions by terror and pity for Amy and Nick. *Gone Girl* has at certain moments a tragic dimension, and by “tragic” I refer to the definition of tragedy⁸⁵ as a story in which high-ranking characters are submitted in a violent way to an implacable and merciless fatality they cannot fight. And this is the case of Nick at

83 See Francis BALLE, *Les médias*, Presses Universitaires de France, 2012 and especially chapter 3 “Les médias: un quatrième pouvoir?” p.93-97 for further elements on the power and influence of media on society.

84 See “Monstre”, definition provided by CNRTL.

85 See “Tragédie”, definition provided by CNRTL.

the end of the movie: one of the last images shows him trapped and defeated, he has no control whatsoever against Amy who embodies this superior and relentless force. He is left powerless, just like the spectator, contrary to Amy who assumes the positions of a monster and an incarnation of fatality as two cathartic forces.

Appendice

The present demonstration rests on a division of the movie in sequences and parts. In order to clarify some analyses, the structure of *Gone Girl* is dissected and displayed in this appendice.

The first part of the film corresponds to the passage from the very beginning (00:00:30) to the moment when Amy re-appears (1:06:12). The second part of the film begins with Nick explaining to Margo that he has been set up by Amy and ends with the final image of Amy's face on Nick's lap. These two parts are very different in terms of issues, stakes, focalization and narration. The first part built on the disappearance of Amy explores Nick and Amy's past and brings the audience to doubt Nick's innocence. Amy's is very present through the voice-over and provokes flash-backs that involve the audience into their marriage. The media are an oppressing and predator-like force that attack and scratch Nick's social image.

The first part ends on a plot twist revealing that Amy wanted to take revenge on Nick and so created a plan to accuse him of her murder.

Here is a succinct story-board to help with the structure of *Gone Girl*:

Mysterious images of an unknown woman with an unknown masculine narrator and then images of deserted landscapes.



Presentation of the male character who was the narrator at the beginning. He discusses his failing marriage with Amy in a bar with his sister. A flash-back through the writing of a diary follows this scene and presents the happy beginnings of the couple.



Nick comes home and notices that Amy is missing, the police begins the investigation. Nick gives informations to the police about his wife and a tour of the house, Detective Boney first seems impressed that Amy Dunne is Amazing Amy, a cartoon character, but soon she

notices a drop of blood and the disappearance of Amy becomes suspicious.



- Nick goes to the police station to be questioned and he has odd reactions. Then he brings back his demented father to the retirement residence and acts once again in a dubious way. Another flashback on Amy and Nick's happy past. The annual treasure hunt for their anniversary is introduced.



- Nick does not seem concerned by the situation, meanwhile the police finds interesting elements at Nick and Amy's house that contradict Nick's side of the story. The press conference is ruined by Nick's distance and awkward behavior. Cases of harassment and assault in Amy's past are disclosed.



- The treasure hunt goes on. Nick searches in an unknown house and sets off the alarm, Detective Rhonda Boney finds him. Another flashback on Amy and Nick's first rough times, introduced by the diary.



- Nick still has an ambiguous attitude: he is flirty with female neighbors, meanwhile researches for Amy continue. The spectator discovers that Nick has a mistress. Amy, during a flash-back, tells why they moved to Missouri, how unhappy they became and she confesses to be afraid of her husband.



Margo discovers that Nick has an affair and flashbacks multiply and shows the threatening presence that Nick became for Amy. The police discovers important traces of blood on the kitchen's floor and the vigil does not go well. The police comes to Nick's house and reveals that Amy was pregnant.



The police discovers Amy's diary in a wood-stove while Nick opens the woodshed and finds all the purchased items that caused Amy and Nick's indebtedness.



Amy re-appears and discloses her evil plan against Nick through a lot of flashbacks. Nick and Margo tries to understand the mobile and the message that Amy wants to send. They realize that Missouri has death penalty.



Meanwhile, Amy changes her appearance and follows the next steps of her plan while watching the news on her case. It is confirmed that Amy wants to punish Nick for cheating on her. Nick goes to see a lawyer to prepare his defense. His lawyer advises him to meet Amy's ex-boyfriends and Nick discovers with Thomas that Amy has a history of false allegations.



Amy is forced to call her ex-lover Desi because she is in trouble: two young people stole her money. Desi takes her to his Lake House. Andy, Nick's mistress goes public on their love affair and Nick goes on national television to defend himself against the accusations.



After an anonymous call that Amy made, the police finds the woodshed full of the purchased items and arrest Nick for murder. Meanwhile, Amy plays the perfect housewife or trophy wife, and as soon as Desi is gone for work, she stages an attack in front of the security camera.



Nick is released from prison and goes home. Amy kills Desi during sexual intercourse and runs away. She goes back home to Nick and falls into his arms in front of an audience of journalists.



She is taken to the hospital, and her wounds are consistent with rape. Amy is interrogated by the police but eludes embarrassing questions. Amy and Nick takes a shower together during which she confirms that she killed Desi and claims that she did it for Nick. Then they argue just before doing



The movie ends with the image of Nick and Amy being on television, and the final image recalls the first one of the movie.



Works Cited

🕒 Primary Source

Gone Girl, David Fincher, starring Ben Affleck (Nick Dunne), Rosamund Pike (Amy Dunne), Neil Patrick Harris (Desi Collings), Tyler Perry (Tanner Bolt), Emily Ratajkowski (Andie Fitzgerald), Carrie Coon (Margo Dunne), Kim Dickens (Detective Rhonda Boney). Written by Gillian Flynn, based on *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn, 20th Century Fox, 2014, DVD.

🕒 Audio-visual resources

Films

Alien 3, David Fincher, starring Sigourney Weaver (Lt. Ellen Ripley), Charles S. Dutton (Leonard Dillon), Charles Dance (Dr. Jonathan Clemens), Paul McGann (Walter Golic). 1992. Written by David Giler, Walter Hill and Larry Ferguson, 20th Century Fox, 1992, DVD.

American Sniper, Clint Eastwood, starring Bradley Cooper (Chris Kyle), Sienna Miller (Taya Renae Kyle), Luke Grimes (Marc Lee). Written by Jason Dean Hall based on *American Sniper* by Chris Kyle, Warner Bros, 2015, DVD.

Collateral, Michael Mann, starring Tom Cruise (Vincent), Jamie Foxx (Max), Mark Ruffalo (Fanning), Jada Pinkett Smith (Annie). Written by Stuart Beattie, Dreamworks Distribution, 2004, DVD.

Fight Club, David Fincher, starring Edward Norton (Taylor Durden), Brad Pitt (Tyler Durden), Helena Bonham Carter (Marla Singer), Meat Loaf (Robert Paulson). Written by Jim Uhls, based on Chuck Palahniuk's book *Fight Club*, 20th Century Fox, 1999, DVD.

Gilda, Charles Vidor, starring Rita Hayworth (Gilda Farrell), Glenn Ford (Johnny Farrell), George Macready (Ballin Mundson). Written by Marion Parsonnet and Ben Hecht, Columbia Pictures, 1946, DVD.

Kill Bill: Vol. 1, Quentin Tarantino, starring Uma Thurman (The Bride), Lucy Liu (O-Ren Ishii), Vivica A. Fox (Vernita Green), Daryl Hannah (Elle Driver), David Carradine (Bill). Written by Quentin Tarantino, Miramax Films. 2003, DVD.

Mad Max: Fury Road, George Miller, starring Charlize Theron (Imperator Furiosa), Tom Hardy (Max), Nicholas Hoult (Nux), Hugh Keays-Byrne (Immortan Joe). Written by George Miller, Brendan McCarthy and Nick Lathouris, Warner Bros, 2015, DVD.

Miss Representation, Jennifer Siebel Newsom. Written by Jennifer Siebel, Jessica Congdon, Claire Dietrich, Jenny Raskin, Girls' Club Entertainment, 2011, WEB.

Monster, Patty Jenkins, starring Charlize Theron (Aileen Wuornos), Christina Ricci (Selby Wall), Bruce Dern (Thomas). Written by Patty Jenkins, Newmarket Films, 2003, DVD.

Panic Room, David Fincher, starring Jodie Foster (Meg Altman), Kristen Stewart (Sarah Altman), Forest Whitaker (Burnham), Dwight Yoakam (Raoul, Jared Leto (Junior). Written by David Koepp, Columbia Pictures, 2002, DVD.

Seven, David Fincher, starring Brad Pitt (David Mills), Morgan Freeman (William Somerset), Gwyneth Paltrow (Tracy Mills), Kevin Spacey (Jonathan Doe), R. Lee Ermey (Police Head). Written by Andrew Kevin Walker, New Line Camera, 1995, DVD.

Silence of the Lambs, Jonathan Demme, starring Jodie Foster (Clarice Starling), Anthony Hopkins (Hannibal Lecter), Scott Glenn (Jack Crawford), Ted Levine (Jame "Buffalo Bill" Gumb). Written by Ted Tally, based on *Silence of the Lambs* by Thomas Harris, Orion Pictures and Strong Heart/Demme Production, 1991, DVD.

Sunset Boulevard, Billy Wilder, starring Gloria Swanson (Norma Desmond), William Holden (Joe Gillis), Erich Von Stroheim (Max Von Mayerling), Nancy Olson (Betty Schaefer), Cecil B. DeMille, Buster Keaton. Written by Billy Wilder, Charles Brackett and D.M. Marshman Jr, Paramount Pictures, 1950, DVD.

Thelma and Louise, Ridley Scott, starring Susan Sarandon (Louise Sawyer), Geena Davis (Thelma Dickinson), Harvey Keitel (Hal Slocombe), Michael Madsen (Jimmy Lennox). Written by Callie Khouri, MGM, 1991, DVD.

The Lady of Shanghai, Orson Welles, starring Rita Hayworth (Elsa "Rosalie" Bannister), Orson Welles (Michael O'Hara), Everett Sloane (Arthur Bannister). Written by Orson Welles based on *If I Die Before I Wake* by Sherwood King, Columbia Pictures, 1947, DVD.

The Game, David Fincher, starring Michael Douglas (Nicholas Van Orton), Sean Penn (Conrad Von

Orton), Deborah Kara Unger (Claire/Christine), James Rebhorn (Jim Feingold). Written by John Brancato and Michael Ferris, PolyGram Fimed Entertainment, 1997, DVD.

Volter, Pedro Almodovar, starring Penelope Cruz (

Zodiac, David Fincher, starring Jake Gyllenhaal (Robert Graysmith), Mark Ruffalo (Detective David Toschi), Robert Downey Jr. (Paul Avery), Anthony Edwards (Detective William Armstrong), Chloe Sevigny (Melanie). Written by James Vanderbilt, based on Robert Graysmith's books, Warner Bros, 2007, DVD.

Videos

David Fincher par Thierry Jousse-Blow Up by Arte, posted on YouTube on July 4th 2013, WEB, consulted in October 2015.

David Fincher – And the Other Way is Wrong by Every Frame a Painting, posted on YouTube on October 1st 2014, WEB, consulted in April 2016.

Gone Girl – Every Detail Matters | Ryan's Theory by Ryan Hollinger, posted on YouTube on February 1st 2015, WEB, consulted in October 2015.

Invisible Split-screen tutorial (The David Fincher Technique) by Ben Gill, posted on YouTube on June 28th, 2015, WEB, consulted in October 2015.

Les Génériques de David Fincher-Blow Up-Arte by Blow Up, l'actualité du cinéma ou presque, posted on YouTube on April, 16th 2016, WEB, consulted in October 2015.

● Bibliography

Books about David Fincher

CALVET Yann, LANTE Jérôme, « David Fincher, simulacre et réalité », in *Éclipses* n°51, december 2012. Printed.

CRAINE James and AITKEN Stuart C., “Street Fighting: placing the crisis of masculinity in David

Fincher's Fight Club”, *Jstor.org*, *GeoJournal*, volume 59, Issue 4, pp.289-296 (april 2004), Web, consulted in June 2016.

CRETE Geoffrey, David Fincher, l'homme qui n'aimait pas les femmes?, *Ecranlarge.com*, Ecran Large, published on October 9th 2014, updated on May 12th 2015, Web, consulted on November 11th 2015.

LEGRAND Dominique, *David Fincher, explorateur de nos angoisses*, Éditions Le Cerf, coll. 7Ème Art, Paris, 2009. Printed.

SCHREIBER Michele, “Tiny Life: Technology and Masculinity in the Films of David Fincher”, *Jstor.org*, *Journal of Video and Film*, volume 68, n°1 (april 2016), Web, consulted in June 2016.

YEO DENNIS, “Gothic Paranoia in David Fincher's *Se7en*, *The Game* and *Fight Club*”, *aeternumjournal.com*, *Aeternum: The Journal of Contemporary Gothic Studies*, Volume 1, Issue 1 (June 2014), Nanyang Technological University, Web, consulted in June 2016.

Resources about *Gone Girl*

DOBBINS Amanda, “Yes, *Gone Girl* Has a Woman Problem”, *vulture.com*, *Vulture*, October 3rd 2014, Web, consulted on November 11th 2015.

DOCKTERMAN Eliana, “Is *Gone Girl* Feminist or Misogynist?”, *time.com*, *TIME*, October 6th 2014, Web, consulted on November 11th 2015.

FLYNN Gillian, *Gone Girl*, Crown Publishers, New York, 2012, printed.

LEPRON Louis, “*Gone Girl*, un film anti-féministe, vraiment?”, *konbini.com*, *Konbini*, published in 2014, Web, consulted on November 11th 2015.

Marion (Name unknown), “*Gone Girl* ou comment faire semblant de ne pas être misogyne”, *lecinemaestpolitique.fr*, *Le cinéma est politique*, November 23th 2014, Web, consulted on November 11th, 2015.

SANER Emine, “The *Gone Girl* backlash : what women don't want”, *theguardian.com*, *The Guardian*, October 7th 2014, Web, consulted on November 11th, 2015.

ZAOUI Zacharie, "David Fincher, *Gone Girl* et la misogynie", *aecfrance.com*, AEC FRANCE, February 2nd 2016, Web, consulted on November 11th 2015.

Works on cinema, gender and women

BURCH Noël, SELLIER Geneviève, *Le Cinéma au Prisme des Rapports de Sexe*, Éditions Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, coll. Philosophie et Cinéma, Paris, 2009. Printed.

BUTLER Judith, *Trouble dans le Genre*, Editions La Découverte, coll. Sciences Humaines et Sociales, Paris, 2006. Printed.

CITRON Michelle, LESAGE Julia, MAYNE Judith, RICH Ruby and TAYLOR Anna Marie, «Women and Film: A Discussion of Feminist Aesthetics », *jstor.org*, in *New German Critique* No. 13, Special Feminist Issue (Winter, 1978), pp. 82-107, Web, consulted in February 2016.

DOANE Mary Ann, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film theory and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, New York, 1991. Printed.

DOANE Mary Ann, "Woman's stake: Filming the Female Body", *jstor.org*, October n°17 (Summer, 1981), pp. 22-36, WEB, consulted in November 2015.

DOANE Mary Ann, "Film and the Masquerade: theorising the female spectator", *screen.oxfordjournals.org*, *Screen* n°23(3-4) (September-October 1982), pp. 74-87, Web, consulted in November 2015.

ECHOLS Alice, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975*, University of Minnesota Press, 1989. Printed

HASKELL Molly, *From Reverence to Rape: the Treatment of Women in Movies*, Penguin Books, New York, 1974. Printed.

HÉRITIER Françoise, *Masculin, Féminin. La pensée de la différence*. Editions O. Jacob, Paris, 1996. Printed.

HIGGINS Lynn A. and SILVER Brenda R., *Rape and representation*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1991. Printed.

- KAPLAN E. Ann, *Looking for the Other : Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze*, Routledge, New York, 1997. Printed.
- KAPLAN E. Ann, *Women in film noir*, British Film Institute, London, 1978. Printed.
- KRAKOVITCH Odile, SELLIER Geneviève, VIENNOT Éliane, *Femmes de pouvoir : mythes et fantasmes*, L'Harmattan, coll. Bibliothèque du Féminisme, Paris, 2001. Printed.
- DE LAURETIS Teresa, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1984. Printed.
- DE LAURETIS Teresa, *Théories Queer et cultures populaires: de Foucault à Cronenberg*, Editions La Dispute, Paris, 2007. Printed.
- McCABE Janet, *Feminist Film Studies: Writing the Woman into Cinema*, Wallflower Paperback, London, 2004. Printed.
- MICHELI-RECHTMAN Vanina, MOSCOVITZ Jean-Jacques, *Du cinéma à la psychanalyse, le féminin interrogé*, Ères, coll. Le regard qui bat, Paris, 2013. Printed.
- MULVEY Laura, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", *composingdigitalmedia.org*, in *Film Theory and Criticism : Introductory Readings* (first published in *Screen*, 1975), New York, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp.833-844, Web, consulted in October 2015.
- PENLEY Constance, *Feminism and Film Theory*, Routledge, New York, 1988. Printed.
- PIRA Fanny, *Les femmes criminelles dans le film noir de 1940 à 1960*, mémoire compiled under the direction of Frédéric Chauveau, Université Sciences Humaines et Arts de Poitiers, 2007, Web.
- RADNER Hilary, STRINGER Rebecca, *Feminism at the Movies: Understanding Gender in Contemporary Popular Cinema*, Routledge, New York, 2011. Printed.
- SICLIER Jacques, *Le mythe de la femme dans le cinéma américain*, Editions du Cerf, coll. 7Ème Art, Paris, 1956. Printed.
- SILVERMAN Kaja, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema (Theories of Representation and Difference)*, Theories of representation and difference series, Indiana University Press, 1988. Web.

VINCENDEAU Ginette, REYNAUD Bérénice, *20 ans de théories féministes sur le cinéma*, CinémAction, Paris, 1993. Web.

TAYLOR Verta. "Sisterhood, Solidarity, and Modern Feminism", *jstor.org*, *Gender and Society*, (1989), pp. 277-86. Web, consulted in April 2016.

THORNHAM Sue, *Feminist Film Theory : A Reader*, New York University Press, New York, 2006. Printed.

WILLIAMS Linda, « When the Woman Looks », reprinted in *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1996. Printed.

About female murderers

ASFOUR Jean-Claude, *Meurtres par procuration : les assassins à l'écran*, Éditions PAC, Paris, 1979. Printed.

BELLARD Chrystèle, *Les crimes au féminin*, Editions L'Harmattan, coll. BibliothèqueS de droit, Paris, 2010. Printed.

BIRCH Helen, *Moving Targets : Women, Murder and Representation*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993. Printed.

BURFOOT Annette and LORDS Susan, *Killing Women : the Visual Culture of Gender and Violence*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo, 2006. Printed.

CREED Barbara, *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, New York, 1993. Printed.

FINCH Kurstin, *When She Was Bad: Framing Female Killers in Contemporary Film*, thesis presented on September 16, 1999, Oregon State University. Web, consulted in April 2016.

JONES Ann, *Women Who Kill*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1980. Printed.

MORRISSEY Belinda, *When Women Kill : Questions of Agency and Subjectivity*, Routledge, London, 2003. Printed.

MORRISON Toni, *Beloved*, 10/18, collection Domaine Etranger, Paris, 1987 (re-edition of 2008).
Printed.

MUNRO Alice, "Child's Play", *kirstenbrandt.dk*, Harper's Magazine, February 2007. Web,
consulted in November 2015.

PARKER Julie, *Representations of Murderous Women in Literature, Theatre, Film and Television:
Examining the Patriarchal Presuppositions Behind the Treatment of Murderesses in Fiction
and Reality*, Edwin Mellen Press Ltd, 2010. Printed.

About the themes of hysteria and madness

ANDRE Emmanuelle, *Le Choc du Sujet : de l'Hystérie au Cinéma (XIXe-XXIe siècle)*, Presses
Universitaires de Rennes, coll. "Le Spectaculaire", Rennes, 2011. Printed.

ANGELIER François, *La Raison en feu ou la fascination du cinéma pour la folie*, Association des
cinémas de l'Ouest pour la recherche, Paris, 1999. Printed.

BELLOUR Raymond, *Le Corps au Cinéma : hypnoses, émotions, animalités*, Éditions P.O.L.,
Paris, 2009. Printed.

LEMPÉRIÈRE Thérèse, « HYSTÉRIE », *universalis.fr*, Encyclopædia Universalis, Web,
consulted on May 21th 2016.

SIMOND Clotilde, *Esthétique et Schizophrénie*, éditions L'Harmattan, collection Champs Visuels,
Paris, 2004. Printed.

Cinema, cinema theory and cinema analysis

AUMONT Jacques, *L'Analyse des films*, Éditions Armand Colin, Paris, 2004. Printed.

BALÁZS Belà, *Le cinéma : nature et évolution d'un art nouveau*, Payot, Paris, 2011, p.57. Printed.

BONITZER Pascal, "Les Silences de la Voix", *Le Regard et la Voix: essais sur le cinéma*, U.G.E.,
coll. 10/18, Paris, 1976. Printed.

- BRENEZ Nicole, « 2. Un art de la description (le cinéma) », *De la figure en général et du corps en particulier*, De Boeck Supérieur, «Arts & Cinéma», Bruxelles, 1998, pp. 385-387. Printed.
- CHION Michel, *La Voix au cinéma*, Editions de l'Etoile/Cahiers du Cinéma, coll. Essais, Paris, 1993. Printed.
- CIEUTAT Michel, *Les grands thèmes du cinéma américain, Tome 2 : Ambivalence et croyances*, Editions du Cerf, Collection 7e Art, Paris, 1991. Printed.
- DELEUZE Gilles, “Chapitre 6 : L'image-affection : visage et gros plan”, in *L'Image-Mouvement*, Editions de Minuit, Collection “Critique”, Paris, 1983, pp.125-144. Printed.
- DELEUZE Gilles, “Chapitre 7 : l'image-affection : qualités, puissances, espaces”, in *L'Image-Mouvement*, Editions de Minuit, Collection “Critique”, Paris, 1983, pp.145-172. Printed.
- DELEUZE Gilles, “Chapitre 8 : De l'affect à l'action : l'image pulsion”, in *L'Image-Mouvement*, Editions de Minuit, Collection “Critique”, Paris, 1983, pp.173-195. Printed.
- ROCHE Thierry, *Du Cinéma comme de l'Anthropologie : le pouvoir de la mise en scène et la mise en scène du pouvoir*, thesis compiled under the direction of Marc-Henri Piau, EHES, Paris, 2007. Web.

Other topics

- BALLE Francis, “Les médias: un quatrième pouvoir?”, in *Les médias*, Presses Universitaires de France, collection que sais-je?, Paris, 2012, pp.93-97. Printed.
- BOOTH Barbara, “One of the most dangerous places for women in America”, *cncb.com*, CNBC, September 22th, 2015. Web, consulted on May 2016.
- DESCAMPS Marc-Alain, « Lilith ou la permanence d'un mythe », in *Le mythe au XXIème siècle*, *cairn.info*, Imaginaire&Inconscient n°7 (2002), pp. 77-86. Consulted on December 10th, 2015. Web.
- GAUVIN Lise, «D'une langue l'autre. La surconscience linguistique de l'écrivain francophone», *L'écrivain francophone à la croisée des langues*. Karthala, Paris, 1997, pp. 1-16. Web.

- LE GUEN Claude, « Complexe d'Œdipe et complexe de castration », *Dictionnaire freudien*, Presses Universitaires Françaises, 2008. Printed.
- MELYON Jodie, *Des corps sans cadre, le corps féminin comme forme autonome*, mémoire compiled under the direction of José Moure, Université Paris I – Panthéon Sorbonne, 2014. Web.
- NAPIKOSKI Linda, “Sisterhood”, *womenshistory.about.com*, About Education, updated on April 12th, 2016, consulted on May, 25 2016, Web.
- PATMORE Coventry, “The Angel in The House”, *gutenberg.org*, Gutenberg, Henry Morley, November 27th 2001. Web, consulted on November 19th, 2015.
- RAZAVET Jean-Claude, « Introduction », *De Freud à Lacan*, De Boeck Supérieur, collection Oxalis, Bruxelles, 2008. Printed.
- WEBER Max, *Economie et Société, Tome 1: Les Catégories de la sociologie*, Editions Pocket, Collection Agora, Paris, 2003. Printed.
- ZUCKERBERG Donna, “He Said, She Said: The Mythical History of the False Rape Allegation”, *jezebel.com*, Jezebel, July 30th, 2015. Web, consulted in May 2016.