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REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN TWO DIFFERENT ADAPTATIONS OF "THE LITTLE MERMAID" FAIRY TALE

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APPROVAL

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- that this Master of Arts Thesis does not contain any material from any research submitted or accepted to obtain a degree or diploma at another educational institution;
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In addition, I acknowledge that any claim of irregularity that may arise in relation to this work will result in a disciplinary action in accordance with the university legislation.

Ecem Şen

_____

Date (20/06/22)

To My Grandmother...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN TWO DIFFERENT ADAPTATIONS OF "THE LITTLE MERMAID" FAIRY TALE

ABSTRACT

The representation of women in fairy tales has been one of the focus areas of feminist studies for decades. The discourses of the tales, especially about the representation of women, can confirm the patriarchal system. Fairy tales are also noteworthy because they are often adapted to movies. The extent to which these adaptations adhere to the fairy tale or what they prefer to change obviously may vary; the film's director, its context, and its genre can, for instance, determine how the film was shot, what type of production it belongs to and what kind of content it will have. The aim of this thesis is to compare two versions of Hans Christian Andersen's tale "The Little Mermaid" adapted for cinema, *The Little Mermaid* (John Musker and Ron Clements, 1989) and *The Lure* (Agniezska Smoczyńska, 2015), in terms of female representation. While making this comparison, the films; focusing on the fact that they belong to two different periods and that they were produced by production forms such as mainstream and independent cinema, the main objective is to investigate how the representation of women and the codes underlined by the tale are conveyed to the audience through their narratives. During this research, feminist film theory will be used and films will be examined mainly through formal analysis while reflecting on their contextual differences.

Keywords: Fairy Tale, Representation of Women, Abjection, *The Little Mermaid*, Male Gaze, Female Voice

"THE LITTLE MERMAID" MASALININ İKİ FARKLI UYARLAMASINDA KADININ TEMSİLİ

ÖZET

Masallardaki kadın temsili, onlarca yıldır feminist çalışmaların odaklandığı alanlardan biri olmuştur. Masalların özellikle kadın temsiliyle ilgili söylemleri ataerkil sistemi doğrulayabilmektedir. Masallar, sıklıkla sinemaya da uyarlanmaları sebebiyle dikkat çekicidir. Bu uyarlamaların ise masala ne kadar bağlı kaldığı ya da neleri değiştirmeyi tercih ettiği, filmin yönetmenine, dönemin şartlarına ve filmin ait olduğu konvansiyona göre değişiklik gösterebilir. Bu durumlar filmin nasıl çekildiğini, ne tür üretim biçimine ait olduğu ve ne tür bir içeriğe sahip olacağı konusunda kilit role sahip olabilir. Bu tezin amacı, Hans Christian Andersen'in sinemaya uyarlanmış "The Little Mermaid" adlı masalının iki farklı versiyonunu, *The Little Mermaid* (John Musker ve Ron Clements, 1989) ve *The Lure* (Agniezska Smoczyńska, 2015), kadın temsili açısından karşılaştırmaktır. Bu karşılaştırmayı yaparken filmlerin; iki farklı döneme ait olmalarına ve ana akım ve bağımsız sinema gibi üretim biçimleri tarafından ortaya koyulmuş olmalarına odaklanarak, anlatıları üzerinden kadın temsilini ve masalın altını çizdiği kodları izleyiciye nasıl aktardığını araştırmak temel hedeftir. Bu araştırmayı yaparken feminist film teoriden yararlanarak biçim ve içerik analizine başvurulacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Masal, Kadın Temsili, Tiksinti, *Küçük Denizkızı*, Eril Bakış, Kadın Sesi

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

The most vivid memories of my childhood are the nights when my grandmother told me fairy tales. In bed before I went to sleep this shared moment would make me so happy that I used to tell my grandmother to lock the door. That way, I thought my mom or dad would not be able to take me away from my grandmother. However, I would still wake up every morning next to my mom and dad. Of course, in those days of my childhood, princes on a white horse, happily-ever-after marriages, and the great rewards for teenage girls who are unwanted by their stepmothers were fascinated me. As I got older, I was quick to realize that childhood dreams were illusions. My acquaintance with cinema developed as the tales started to stay in the background. The first movie I watched in the cinema was Disney's *Pocahontas* (Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg, 1995). Even though the movie was not a fairy tale adaptation, it was a Disney movie and the love was the lead role. When I look back, the structure of the main ideas revealed by fields such as fairy tales and cinema, which have a great impact on children's imagination, when it comes to romantic relationships, of course, stand out as subjects studied and examined. The important point I see here is that tales create various stereotypes for women and men and produce certain social roles through these stereotypes. The fairy tales we grew up with, from "Cindrella" to "Snow White", often position young girls at a point where they need the love of men. The characters' main motivation is usually marriage, and the narrative ends when the marriage finally takes place. Generally there is nothing more than marriage and a man in a woman's life. Because of this approach of fairy tales (of course there are exceptions), names like Cristina Bacchilega (2016) made feminist analyzes, while names like Angela Carter gave examples of feminist rewriting in fairy tales.

It was an interesting choice to examine films based on a fairy tale, on this path that I set out by taking into account my childhood memories. While choosing a tale, I had different options. However, Christian Andersen's tale "The Little Mermaid" also intrigued me because offered a two-way path to the main character and although it seemed to place the man in the center, it also gave a different motivation to the female protagonist. The fact that the binary alternative presented by the tale also affected the films it was adapted to,

also enabled to make choices according to the language they created, and brought results based on these choices. In my thesis, I will compare two films based on the fairy tale "The Little Mermaid" written by Christian Andersen. While determining the films, my main motivation was to choose productions with narrative structures that largely follow the skeleton of the tale. Of course, when we look at the history of cinema, there are many different adaptations of the tale. However, these films, which I can give as an example such as *The Little Mermaid* (2018, Blake Harris and Chris Bouchard), stand out as productions that make the film a fairy tale by establishing a different story framework and including a mermaid in this story. Instead of this, I chose to put the films that follow the narrative structure of the tale in the center of my thesis, although they adapt the characters based on the plot of the tale.

Two films I chose allow for a detailed formal analysis as they are quite different from each other, following the same tale with their different features that I will explain in the following chapters. Disney's adaptation *The Little Mermaid* (John Musker, Ron Clements, 1989) is an example of mainstream cinema and relatively old film. *The Lure* (Agniezska Smoczyńska, 2015), on the other hand, is a relatively new, and an independent Polish production. Throughout my thesis, I will examine whether these differences, which we have identified through the two films at first glance, cause a change in the narratives of the two films based on the same tale. While reviewing with a contextual and formal analysis both films, I will benefit from feminist film theory. In the first chapter, I will explain how feminist film theory has developed from its inception and what it focuses on. Since feminist film theory is very closely related to psychoanalysis, I will also touch on the contributions that psychoanalysis has made to feminist film theory. Then, before moving on to the contextual and formal analysis of the films, I will narrate the plot of the tale. In the second chapter, while examining Disney's adaptation *The Little Mermaid* with its similar and different aspects to the fairy tale, I will analyze the protagonist's appearance on the screen and her abandonment of her own way of existence due to her love for the prince, through gender roles. I will detail the female protagonist's desire to be what the man wants and her loss of voice through Irigaray's concepts of "specula(riza)tion" and "parler femme". I will evaluate the meanings of the movie's preferred ending and focus on the way the working codes overlap with mainstream

cinema. In the third chapter, while evaluating the similarities and differences of *The Lure* with the fairy tale, I will focus on the consequences of the narrative's preference to use two sisters instead of a single mermaid, and the positioning of the Siren, a wild and murderous mythological figure, instead of a mermaid. Then, I will examine the way the Sirens take place in the film through Kristeva's concept of "abjection" and Creed's "monstrous feminine" approach. I will evaluate the meanings of the ending of the film and touch on where all the codes stand in the narrative of independent cinema. As a result, when comparing the results obtained from the analysis of the films, I will question what kind of differences the choices made can cause in the way cinema reflects women, even if they start from the same point. Basically, for these two films, it should be questioned to what extent the time period in which the films were produced, the socio-political conditions of that period, the convention to which the films belonged, could have an impact on the forms of representation created by the film.

1. FEMINIST FILM THEORY

Cinema has always been a fascinating art form with the stories it tells and the way it tells these stories. Along with the developing second wave feminism in the 1970s, cinema began to be re-examined in relation women's stories, female characters and female directors conveyed by this fascinating art, and feminist film theory that developed in this context tried to approach cinema and cinema history with a different perspective. "Before film studies became an academic field, women's film festivals were an important forum for political activism and discussion of women and film" (Code 2002, 203). With her books on Hollywood cinema, Marjorie Rosen's *Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies, and the American Dream* (1973) and Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in Movies* (1974) have historically examined how women are positioned in mainstream cinema. Meanwhile, "feminist film theory was quickly dominated by psychoanalysis and semiotics, an approach advocated by journals such as Screen, m/f and Camera Obscura. British feminists, in particular, considered film -a sophisticated representational system that produced fantasy and incited desire- to be ripe for psychoanalytic readings" (Code 2002, 203). Claire Johnston is notable for being one of the first feminist critics to work on this subject. According to Johnston in her article *Women's Cinema as a Counter Cinema*, "The sign 'woman' represents the ideological meaning that she has for men; in relation to herself she means no-thing, women are negatively represented as 'not-man'; the 'woman-as-woman' is absent from the text of the film" (Johnston 1979, 25-26). Johnston mentions how women have been stereotyped in movies since silent cinema and criticizes the limited role given to women.

"In Europe, feminist analysis of cinema had been informed by the combination of Marxism and psychoanalysis which characterizes the Critical School, paying attention to films as consumer items to be soldideally and commercially" (Smelik 1998, 8-9). According to Smelik, "Cinema is assumed to be reflecting reality. In this sociological view, the objection to the dream factory of Hollywood is that it produces false

consciousness, that films do not show 'real' women but only the stereotypical images of an ideologically laden 'femininity'" (Smelik 1998, 8). This situation is far from presenting a diversity to the female audience through the female characters that they can identify with, and it causes the woman to be imprisoned in certain stereotypes through both the characters in the movie and the audience. In addition, according to Smelik, the verisimilitude structure of classical narrative cinema causes the female characters represented to be perceived as real (Smelik 1998, 9). Thus, "the resulting female image is found to be natural, realistic and attractive" (Smelik 1998, 9). These female representations, which seem natural, realistic and attractive, are actually positioned quite far from the "real" female image. What a liberative women's cinema should look like in this framework can be guessed: female filmmakers have to undo the spell of a culturally dominant fantasy of the eternal feminine by showing the 'real' life of 'real' women on the silver screen (Smelik 1998, 8). Of course, since the beginning of feminist film theory, which started to come to the fore in the 1970s, -the effects of the "#metoo" movement is undeniable- there have been transformations in the way women represent themselves in cinema. Unfortunately, although it is not possible to find these transformations sufficient, it is undeniable that important developments took place in this process.

1.1. A Groundbreaking Approach: Male Gaze

Even though I applied early to Smelik, who dealt with the process of feminist film theory in a summative way, it is necessary to return to Laura Mulvey in order to better understand the theory. Laura Mulvey analyzes this believable yet female-restricting nature of classical narrative cinema in her shocking article, *The Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. With using a psychoanalytical framework, Laura Mulvey introduces the concept of male gaze. Taking Freud's term scopophilia to the center, Mulvey positions the cinema as an act of enjoying watching. "Classical cinema, adds Mulvey, stimulates the desire to look by integrating structures of voyeurism and narcissism into the story and the image" (Smelik 1998, 9). While voyeuristic pleasure arises from looking at another, the person being looked at becomes the object of the beholder. "Although the instinct is modified by other factors, in particular the constitution of the ego, it continues to exist as the erotic basis for pleasure in looking at another person as object" (Mulvey 1975, 4). At this point,

a narcissistic pleasure emerges. However, Mulvey mentions that this narcissistic pleasure has two stages, and she centers Lacan's mirror stage to explain the second stage. Lacan's mirror stage can be explained as the 6-18 months old child's beginning to define himself as a separate individual from the (m)other when s/he sees her/his image in the mirror or in the reflection of any field, including her/his mother's pupil. In the mirror stage, the infant defines her/his own body for the first time by separating it from (m)other. This recognition establishes the ego. According to Mulvey, the child's self-recognition in the mirror is a misrecognition (Mulvey 1975, 5).

After the establishment of the ego, implied by the mirror phase, takes place through this kind of recognition and even misrecognition, the subjectivity of the self is formed. According to Mulvey, "This is a moment when an older fascination with looking (at the mother's face, for an obvious example) collides with the initial inklings of self-awareness (Mulvey 1975, 5). Thus, a relationship is established between image and self-image. It can be said that this relationship takes place similarly between the screen and the audience. The viewer sees a reflection on the screen and defines herself/himself through this reflection. Thus, an identification takes place between the audience and the character, based on Lacan's mirror phase. The spectator makes her/his self-construction again through a reflection. According to Mulvey's definition, "the cinema has structures of fascination strong enough to allow temporary loss of ego while simultaneously reinforcing the ego (Mulvey 1975, 5).

Although Mulvey does not go into too much details in her article about how the view towards the female image raises the fear of castration, Smelik interprets Mulvey's approach as follows: "Because her appearance also reminds the male subject of the lack of a penis, the female character is a source of much deeper fears. Classical cinema solves the threat of castration in one of two ways: via the narrative structure or through fetishism" (Smelik 1998, 11). In order to overcome this fear of castration, the ways of classical narrative cinema generally offer two options for the female character: death or marriage. In this way, the woman ceases to pose a castration danger. In her book, where she examines the female voice in cinema through psychoanalysis, Kaja Silverman extensively covers the castration fear that the cinematic image creates independently of

the female representation. Silverman refers to Metz when raising she brings up the fear of castration.

> Christian Metz makes much of this particular absence. Because the spectator and the actor are never in the same place at the same time, cinema is the story of missed encounters, of "the failure to meet of the voyeur and the exhibitionist whose approaches no longercoincide." Moreover, unlike theater, which employs real actors to depict fictional characters, film communicates its illusions through other illusions; it is doubly simulated, the representation of a representation. (Silverman 1988, 3)

Although the cinema makes various promises to the audience with its images and sound, there is an absence behind these promises. Like the little boy who sees the female genitals for the first time and who disavows the absence of the penis, this viewer refuses to acknowledge what he or she knows full well— that cinema is founded on the lack of the object (Smelik 1998, 4). In addition to this approach of Silverman and Metz; Mulvey, who likens the cinematic experience to a castration, constructs this through the perspective directed at women. In doing so, Mulvey evaluates the gaze as active and passive through sexual differences.

> In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to 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. (Mulvey 1975, 6-7)

When we look at the narrative structure of mainstream cinema, we see that the male character is generally established as active and strong. The action and all the events take place around the male character and the character plays an active role in these events. The female characters, on the other hand, are like the accompaniment of the events, they are positioned passively, far from taking any action and taking the narrative one step further by making decisions. The active man's gaze is also active and directed towards the woman. The woman exhibits a passive attitude as the object of desire and the cared for. When evaluated by the audience, Smelik says;

> The spectator in the theatre is automatically and often unconsciously made to identify with the male look, because the camera films from the optical, as well as libidinal, point of view of the male character. There are thus three levels of the cinematic gaze (camera, character and spectator) that objectify the female character and make her into a spectacle. (Smelik 1998, 10)

When we return to the point of identification of the audience with the male character, it is useful to recall Mulvey's explanation over Lacan's mirror phase. Smelik makes an interpretation regarding this identification;

> Representation of "the more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego" of the male hero stands in stark opposition to the distorted image of the passive and powerless female character. Hence the spectator is actively made to identify with the male rather than with the female character in film. (Smelik 1998, 11)

In this way of identification, it is important that the male character is active as well as the owner of the gaze. While constructing the film narration, directors generally shape the camera movements through the male gaze. Male characters' point of views are often used, and these P.O.V.'s are often directed at parts of the female body. With Mulvey and Johnston, the notion of 'the male gaze' has become a shorthand term for the analysis of complex mechanisms in cinema that involve structures like voyeurism, narcissism and fetishism (Smelik 1998, 11). This approach helps us to understand how cinema was built on male gaze. Feminist film theory, of course, does not get stuck on these points. At what point does the female audience stand in the mainstream cinema, where the male has the look and the audience is positioned as a male?

1.2. The Female Spectatorship

This is where Mulvey is often criticized when she talks about male gaze. Mulvey suggests that the female spectator may not only identify with the slot of passive femininity which has been programmed for her, but she is also likely to enjoy adopting the masculine point of view, even if she remains "restless in its transvestite clothes" (Smelik 1998, 12). Mary Ann Doane interprets female spectatorship as a masquerade (Doane 1987, 22). Voyeurism presupposes distance, a distance that woman in cinema necessarily lacks because she is the image. Therefore the female look does not rest on the necessary gap between subject and object in so far as woman is never quite a subject (Smelik 1998, 12). This situation can only be avoided by wearing a mask that will cause the female viewer to distance themselves from the female image. However, Doane underlines that this is not enough to break the masculine view. According to Doane, instead of consuming the image presented to her, the female audience is consumed by the image and it seems to her that desire to desire is the only option (Doane 1987, 22). According to Kaplan, female gaze is

possible and can be positioned as the object of male female gaze and desire, as in female films made in the 70s and 80s, but "the problem is that, as female, her desire has no power" (Kaplan 1988, 29). According to Gertrud Koch, the female viewer can enjoy the image of the woman, that is, the presentation of herself as an object of desire (as cited in Smelik 1998, 15). This situation "allows for a female homo-erotic pleasure which is not exclusively negotiated through the eyes of men" (Smelik 1998, 14). Koch's approach can certainly bring to mind the approach that Freud developed for girls about the love they have for their mothers in the preoedipal period and fictionalized about women's bisexual tendency. Gaylyn Studlar, also focuses on this pre-oedipal process and reminds us that at this stage the mother is positioned as a love object. (as cited in Smelik 1998, 14). Based on this, Smelik claims that the female viewer can enjoy the image of the woman on the silver screen. According to Smelik, "Cinema evokes the desire of the spectator to return to the pre-oedipal phase of unity with the mother and of bisexuality" (Smelik 1998, 14). Up to this point, it is possible to see the debates about the interpretation of the male gaze, established by the cinema, through a female spectator. However, we still have not found a clear answer on where to find the woman's voice or look. Regarding this, it may be appropriate to take a look at the studies on the female author and female voice.

Kaja Silverman switched analysis from male gaze to female voice in *The Acoustic Mirror* (1988). "The aesthetic approaches, individual experiences and films of women directors are as diverse as their individual life situations and the cultures in which they live – so there is no implication that women are a homogenous or singular group (and gender is, of course, only one aspect of any individual's identity)" (Ulfsdotter and Backman 2018, 9). Of course, regardless of whether a man or a woman, life experience through gender roles will affect the personality of the person. "The key marker of the 'female gaze' is the communication or expression of female subjectivity – a gaze shaped by a female 'look', voice and perspective – the subjective experience or perspective of someone who lives in a female body (female agency is privileged) (Ulfsdotter and Backman 2018, 10). However, according to Koch, there is still an unresolved issue despite decades of struggle. No matter what the female character, camera, man or an object looks at, she will always be in the position of "the one who is different" (Ulfsdotter and Backman 2018, 11). There

is a suggestion by Ulfsdotter and Rogers to eliminate this difference approach and normalize the female gaze:

> Women often make the point that they make films about women because those are the stories they are interested in, and that it is a natural thing to do – which is not to say they should make films only about women, only that they are more likely to do so. The implications of this argument are that having more women filmmakers will likely lead to more films about women, so equal participation in production arguably promotes diversity in representation. (Ulfsdotter and Backman 2018, 16)

Mulvey also mentions that an alternative cinema is needed to solve these problems. This alternative cinema may be a cinema with brand new codes, or it may be a cinema that modifies the existing codes according to itself. Annie Leclerc introduced the concept of "parole de femme" in her book, in which she also devoted a large part to the biological structure of the female body (Leclerc 2001). Luce Irigaray, on the other hand, dreams of a language structure in which femininity can be conveyed. Nancy Miller also emphasizes that an author's sexual identity plays an absolute role in the product he produces (Silverman 1988, 141). Irigaray says the following on the subject;

> "Sexual difference" is a derivative of the problematics of sameness, it is, now and forever, determined within the project, the projection, the sphere of representation, of the same. The "differentiation" into two sexes derives from the a priori assumption of the same, since the little man that the little girl is, must become a man minus certain attributes whose paradigm is morphological—attributes capable of determining, of assuring, the reproduction-specularization of the same. A man minus the possibility of (re)presenting oneself as a man = a normal woman (Irigaray 1985a, 26-27)

At this point, it is useful to remember Freud's interpretation of the clitoris: "small and inconspicuous organ," From this perspective, "She is obliged to function as a stand-in for the male subject's mother, who is the only (heterosexual) object he is ever capable of loving (Silverman 1988, 143). Irigaray frequently talks about the clitoris and vulva and establishes the woman's language over the body: "a language capable of coexisting with that body as closely as the two lips of the vulva coexist" (Silverman 1988, 144). Silverman says of Irigaray's approach, "she imagines it possible to elaborate a new language which would have a different relation to the body" (Silverman 1988, 144). Irigaray argues that, in her own words, the parler femme emerges when she establishes a different relationship with the woman's body. "The insistence on the need to formulate a means of speaking

(as) woman reflects a desire to rework traditional patterns of sexed subjectivity in order to produce the feminine in language" (Bainbridge 2009, 11).

> Parler femme is intended to work on a range of levels: firstly, it provides a means of articulating the alterity of feminine desire by speaking through and for the position(s) of woman; secondly, it raises the issue of where to locate the feminine speaking subject it opens up the field of enunciation to include what gets excluded by masculinist patterns of discourse and representation; thirdly, it reveals the necessity of female genealogies for the production of the feminine as a position of enunciation and representation. (Bainbridge 2009, 23)

Another of Irigaray's terms that I will use in my thesis is "specularization". According to Bainbridge's statement; "Women have come to represent the reflection of the masculine to the masculine subject so that women and the feminine are defined, not in their own terms, but rather in relation to specifically masculine attributes such as the phallus" (Bainbridge 2009, 18). What is implied by specularization is that the woman reflects the man's preferred form of femininity. For this reason, a woman is far from seeing her own unique reflection.

> Participation in a society requires that the body submit itself to a specularization, a speculation, that transforms it into a value-bearing object, a standardized sign, an exchangeable signifier, a 'likeness' with reference to an authoritative model [the masculine]. (Irigaray 1985b, 174–175)

Under these conditions, women circulate as signs and reproduce the meanings of the symbolic order without creating or carrying a unique meaning. So, where is the woman who speaks by producing a female language, or the woman who inverts the specularization, who tends to reflect herself as she is, or how is she represented in the cinema? The woman who is out of the control of the man can be called monstrous feminine, as Barbara Creed (1993) puts it. This representation, which we encounter especially in horror movies, seems to reveal the fear and approach of men about women with their own mobility.

1.3. Monstrous Feminine and Abjection

It would be appropriate to take a look at the studies of feminist film theory on female characters in horror films, since *The Lure*, one of the films I will examine in my thesis, is

from the horror-musical genre, its characters are represented as Sirens instead of mermaids, and they eat human flesh. It is quite possible to see female monstrous in horror movies. For this, it is possible to take a look at the examples given by Barbara Creed in her book *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*:

> The female monster, or monstrous-feminine, wears many faces: the amoral primeval mother (*Aliens*, 1986); vampire (*The Hunger*, 1983); witch (*Carrie*, 1976); woman as monstrous womb (*The Brood*, 1979); woman as bleeding wound (*Dressed to Kill*, 1980); woman as possessed body (*The Exorcist*, 1973); the castrating mother (*Psycho*, 1960); woman as beautiful but deadly killer (*Basic Instinct*, 1992); aged psychopath (*Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*, 1962); the monstrous girl-boy (*A Reflection of Fear*, 1973); woman as non-human animal (*Cat People*, 1942); woman as life-in-death (*Life-force*, 1985); woman as the deadly femme castratrice (*I Spit On Your Grave*, 1978). (Creed 1993, 22-23)

Although it is common for women to be represented under these titles in addition to being "victims" in horror movies in general, it is possible to claim that studies on the representation of women as a monster are limited in this regard. While Creed complains about the limitations of the field, she also bases her own analysis on psychoanalysis. To understand how Creed made use of psychoanalysis, it is necessary to refer to Freud once again. Freud builds the man's fear of women on the basis of his thinking that the mother was castrated at a very young age. The woman is also a frightening figure on her own, as it reminds the man of the lack of a penis. When this frightening figure is projected to the cinema through horror movies, terrifying abject images may emerge. "Man's fascination with and fear of female sexuality is endlessly reworked within the signifying practices of the horror film" (Creed 1993, 35).

"Specifically, he fears that woman could castrate him both psychically and in a sense physically. He imagines the latter might take place during intercourse when the penis 'disappears' inside woman's 'devouring mouth'" (Lurie, 55). Lurie's phrase "devouring mouth" certainly brings to mind the vagina dentata. As Campbell mentioned, "there are stories of the toothed vagina, that is, castrating vagina, encountered in primitive mythologies" (Campbell 2000, 73). According to various myths, women castrate the man's penis because she has "teeth" in her vagina. Vagina dentata can be represented by the presence of various monsters, aliens, witches' mouths, scary, sharp teeth and a sticky liquid rather than images of vaginas in the cinema.

The fear that the woman creates because of her appearing castrated also leads us to conclude that she is a victim. However, according to Creed's claim, the establishment of monstrous feminine as active characters rather than passive, turning the action around themselves proves that this image is feminist and liberating (Creed 1993, 39). After explaining the monstrous feminine approach in general terms, it would be appropriate to approach the dehumanizing features of women in horror movies through the concept of abjection, which Kristeva elaborates in her book *Powers of Horror*. In its most basic definition, abject does not "respect borders, positions, rules, that which disturbs identity, system, order" (Kristeva 1982, 4). A certain order, which Lacan defines as a symbolic order, is dominant in society, and the boundaries of this order are generally clearly drawn. The incest taboo can be given as an example to the strictest of these limits. What is abject can be anything that violates these boundaries, disregards the rules, and threatens. Kristeva generally bases abjection on three pillars. These are the border, the mother-child relationship and the female body. Kristeva often makes use of religious beliefs and myths while explaining these approaches. Thus, the conclusion we have reached is how rooted and ancient the situations defined as abject are. "Particularly in relation to the following religious 'abominations': sexual immorality and perversion; corporeal alteration, decay and death; human sacrifice; murder; the corpse; bodily wastes; the feminine body and incest" (Creed 1993, 44). I will elaborate on the titles Creed points out in the analysis of *The Lure*.

Abjection can be defined as a self-construction of the subject by separating itself from the object. To return to Kristeva's border approach, the subject is afraid of violating the limits of the self s/he has established. The violation of these borders is again the subject of abjection. "The abject is the place when meaning collapses. It signifies all that marks the unstable boundaries of the self, usually things flowing in and out of the body (food, vomit, faeces, sweat, milk, mucus)" (Smelik 1998, 163). Smelik, one of the wastes of the body, is referring to Irigaray and Whitford's interpretation and says that the mucous, the abject bodily fluids, is a way of transforming the dominant system of representations as to provide women with a "female symbolic". According to Irigaray, the mucous can uncover the unrepresented and unthought, so it can help feminist film theory to symbolize the maternal in a nonphallic way (Smelik, 1998, 163).

It is also possible to say that abject can destroy the taboos of the masculine world. Kristeva understands the abject as a liberating transgression of taboos (Smelik 1998, 163). "In Kristeva's view, woman is specifically related to polluting objects which fall into two categories: excremental and menstrual. This in turn gives woman a special relationship to the abject" (Creed 1993, 49). Because of that, "In Kristeva's view the image of woman's body, because of its maternal functions, acknowledges its 'debt to nature' and consequently is more likely to signify the abject" (Creed 1993, 51). The female body and female sexuality can be seen as the most important phenomenon that can overcome and threaten the symbolic order and the limits it draws.

"The abject threatens life; it must be 'radically excluded'" (Kristeva 1982, 2). Kristeva explains this situation with disgust from food when defining abject at the most basic level. She mentions a nausea and vomiting reflex that can occur during the theme of the body with something that disgusts like a slip of milk. However, the cream formed on the milk and the milk that forms a cream emphasizes the desire and sexual intercourse of the mother and father to create the baby. Kristeva interprets the disgust of the implication of the existing person as disgusting herself/himself. "In relation to the horror film, it is relevant to note that food loathing is frequently represented as a major source of abjection, particularly the eating of human flesh" (Creed 1993, 46). Eating human flesh is one of the important taboos such as incest. It is a serious border violation. In addition, a dead body is abject, a representation of human beings and where they should stay away from. The body is another border violation because it exists in a living life without living.

> In relation to the horror film, it is relevant to note that several of the most popular horrific figures are 'bodies without souls' (the vampire), the 'living corpse' (the zombie), corpse-eater (the ghoul) and the robot or android. What is also interesting is that such ancient figures of abjection as the vampire, the ghoul, the zombie and the witch (one of her many crimes was that she used corpses for her rites of magic) continue to provide some of the most compelling images of horror in the modern cinema. Were-creatures, whose bodies signify a collapse of the boundaries between human and animal, also belong to this category. (Creed 1993, 47)

It can be seen that these situations, which are described as abject, are the situations in horror films when examined. "In some horror films the monstrous is produced at the border between human and inhuman, man and beast" (Creed 1993, 50). Based on this approach of Creed, in *The Lure,* the Sirens which have a semi-female appearance between

human and animal and eat human flesh, will be examined as abject objects considering the above-mentioned reasons.

1.4. Andersen's Fairy Tale: "The Little Mermaid"

"The Little Mermaid" is a folk tale compiled by Hans Christian Andersen and printed in 1837. He published "The Little Mermaid" in 1837 as a part of a larger collection titled "Fairy Tales Told for Children". Andersen's inspiration in this fairy tale is "Undine" (1811), written by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué. Fouqué's narrative, "Undine", a minor classic, was influenced by Paracelsus's treatise about the four soulless nature spirits, one of which is the undine. As in many tales of Andersen, it is underlined that "The Little Mermaid" carries autobiographical elements from Andersen's life (Sells, 1995). "The Little Mermaid" can also be read as a reflection of the social exclusion in the aristocratic environment where Andersen is located and his longing for a different status from the status.

Andersen's fairy tale was adapted to cinema through different films and has changed shape in every adaptation and transfer. In the content of the thesis, the structural analysis of *The Little Mermaid* (1989), which is based on the same fairy tale, one of which is a mainstream cinema sample, and *The Lure* (2015), an independent cinema sample produced much more recently, and the strategies of transferring the tale to the screen will be compared. In order to detail the basis of these comparisons, it is necessary to take a look at the narrative of the fairy tale.

The protagonist is a 14 years old young and exciting mermaid. Under the sea, isolated from the earth, the father of the mermaid, who lives a life in their kingdoms with sea creatures, is the king of the seas, and the king has six daughters, including the little mermaid. Her father warns her daughters that the human being is a malicious creature, that the earth is a very dangerous place, that people constantly pollute the world and the sea, and that they harm the vitality. The king has an agreement with the girls who are very curious about the earth. Any mermaid that is 15 years old and has her own crown can go to the water surface once a year and observe people's life. When the protagonist finally starts 15 years of age, the surface of the water comes out. She sees that a party was held

15

on board for the handsome prince's birthday. During the party, a violent storm begins and the prince, who is about to drown from the wreckage of the overturned ship, is rescued by the little mermaid and the mermaid leaves the prince unconscious. A young girl comes out of the temple and sees the prince and goes to help. The prince thinks that the girl in the temple saved him during the time.

The little mermaid is very upset about this situation and falls into a deep melancholia. She constantly thinks of the prince. Then she goes to talk to her grandmother. The little mermaid asks her grandmother whether people can live forever. Her grandmother says, although a mermaid can live for 300 years, human life is in the range of 70-80 years. However, at the end of 300 years, while a mermaid turns into a foam, she does not neglect to mention that people have a spirit that exists forever. Upon this information, the little mermaid goes to the witch of the submarine world. The agreement with the sea witch is as follows: The little mermaid will have legs in response to her voice and semi-fish body and will continue to live in the form of human beings and dance as well as nobody can. However, every step she takes with her legs will be as painful as walking on the knives. She will never return to the sea again and only if she wins the love of the prince, she will have a soul. The prince is influenced by the beauty of the little mermaid, but she cannot speak because she loses her voice, she dances instead and entertains the prince with her dance. A great friendship begins between them, but there is no more than that. Meanwhile, the prince's family wants their sons to marry and proposes the princess of the neighboring country. It is understood that the princess was a young girl in the temple when the little mermaid saved the prince. The sisters of the little mermaid bought a knife from the witch of the submarine world in exchange for their long and beautiful hair. If the little mermaid kills the prince with this knife and dripped his blood to her own feet, she will be able to return to the seas. However, she succumbs for the sake of her love and cannot kill the prince. She leaves herself in deep waters to disappear as a foam. However, death does not occur as expected and the protagonist is mixed with the atmosphere. At this point, the daughters of the air take the little mermaid with them and if the mermaid serves humanity with kindness for 300 years, she is entitled to a soul.

Before moving on to the analysis of films, it may be necessary to underline the basic approaches that the fairy tale highlight. First of all, the little mermaid has a family in the submarine world. It consists of family, father, sisters and grandmother. Although the rules of the father, the continuation of the order, the existence of sisters and grandmother is important in terms of the place covered by female characters in the fairy tale. The main purpose of the mermaid is to live forever with a spirit. The real driving force in being human is to have a soul next to the love of the prince. The sea witch refers to this transformation is not absolute good or absolute bad, she does not have bad plans for the little mermaid. She fulfills the request of the mermaid. She also gives information to the sisters of the mermaid about how to deteriorate magic. The mermaid loses her voice in exchange for being human and will suffer great physical pain in every step she takes. The prince approaches the little mermaid friendly and does not respond to her love. When the mermaid is on the verge of death, daughters of the air helps her and give a spirit that will exist forever in exchange for her services to humanity. These details that we are underline should be kept in mind as the factors that we are focus on when analyzing films and establishing dual contradictions.

2. AN APPROACH THAT LIMITS WOMAN: *THE LITTLE MERMAID*

The Little Mermaid, the 28th animated feature film produced by Walt Disney Pictures, is based on Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale of the same name. The film was written and directed by John Musker and Ron Clements. *The Little Mermaid*, which gave Disney a breath of fresh air after *Mickey Mouse*, followed the original version of the tale to a large extent, but also made major changes that needed to be examined in its narrative structure. *The Little Mermaid*, with its story that was adapted to the cinema by Disney and is more known today than the original version of the tale, has moved away from Andersen's mermaid narrative that goes after having a soul and has become a binary opposition with *The Lure*. One of the points to keep in mind when evaluating *The Little Mermaid* on the basis of the discourses it reveals in general is that the movie is a relatively old movie compared to *The Lure*. At the time the film was shot, it had not been a long time since the emergence of feminist film theory. Although the films are started to be evaluated through the representations of women, this situation is not common, and it is possible to say that the point reached today has not been reached. In this period, when we can say that femininity is still evaluated within the boundaries of the patriarchal system, it is possible to see that the film limits its protagonist in this context. In addition, one of the points that I base on while establishing a binary opposition between *The Little Mermaid* and *The Lure* is that the Disney adaptation is a movie that applies the mainstream conventions to the letter.

In the Disney adaptation of the tale, the little mermaid (Ariel) gives up the basic key features of her psyche, such as her unique features, being half-fish, and her charming voice, for a man (Prince Eric), unlike the fairy tale, this time her love will be met. Again, the deep curiosity of the little mermaid on the surface of the water and on people's lives plays the leading role in the movie. With the guidance of flying birds, we see that the camera is turned to a ship and we meet Prince Eric. The crew working on the ship commented, "King Triton is having a good day" at the beautiful weather they see. Ariel's father, King Triton, has a name before his appearance. After Prince Eric, Triton, the king of the undersea world, is presented to the audience in a visually magnificent way this time. Triton is portrayed as a majestic authority figure by occupying most of the frame and positioning the camera below eye level in every scene he takes part in throughout the film.

Figure 2.1: King Triton from *The Little Mermaid*

The film, which we can say begins with a kind of introduction of the undersea world and the characters, continues with a concert event organized by the king, who shows his love for his daughter with his protective attitudes and is positioned as an authority figure, to honor his daughter Ariel and her voice. In this glorious celebration, Ariel must take the stage and sing after her older sisters. The words in the songs of Ariel's sisters are also noteworthy: The sisters, who continue to sing "Triton, our father who gave us a name", convey the rule-making and naming nature of the man to the audience at the very beginning of the film. In order to increase the excitement of the audience even more, we see that the oyster that opens when the music rises and will bring the audience together with Ariel is empty. While the male characters are presented to the audience one after the other from the opening scene of the movie, the first meeting of the audience with the main character of the movie, Ariel, takes place through the absence of the character. In the continuation of the movie, the absence of Ariel, which we can trace in her revealing herself, is disclosed at the very beginning of the movie. Beyond this reading, the reason Ariel missed the event is that she forgot about this magnificent celebration while she was busy collecting and tending human shipwrecks and objects used by humans with her fish friend, Flounder. The way Ariel is introduced from the moment she physically meets the audience is that she is an active and curious character. Again, one day, when she comes to the surface with Flounder, she witnesses the birthday celebration of the prince (Eric) on the ship. The grand celebration is disrupted by a storm, and Ariel rescues the drowning

Prince Eric from the capsized ship. Bringing the prince ashore, Ariel sings a song with her magnificent voice to the prince, who is about to sober up. Eric hears the song and sobers up, but just then, Ariel has to disappear because she is forbidden to communicate with humans. The film then follows the same narrative structure as the fairy tale. Ariel, who is in love with Prince Eric and wants to be with him, goes to visit the scary sea witch named Ursula and makes a deal with her. Ursula has an important motivation for this agreement. Exiled from the undersea kingdom by King Triton, Ursula wants to use Ariel to avenge Triton. The little mermaid gives her voice to Ursula in exchange for being human. However, according to the conditions of the spell, the prince must kiss Ariel with great love within three days. If he does not reciprocate her love within three days, Ariel will become Ursula's prisoner. When Ariel regains her new appearance with her legs, she is found by Prince Eric on the seashore. No matter how hard the little mermaid tries, she cannot convince the prince who she is because she cannot speak. There is a strong rapprochement between Ariel and the prince. Although the tale emphasizes that the prince's closeness is friendly at this point, Prince Eric has a clear interest in Ariel in the movie. While on a private boat tour, Prince Eric is about to kiss Ariel, but Ursula's evil fishes crash into the boat and sabotage the moment. Seeing that the spell is in jeopardy and Prince Eric begins to fall in love with Ariel, Ursula puts a new plan in motion. Ursula, disguised as a very beautiful young woman, uses Ariel's voice, which she has trapped in a necklace. Prince Eric, suddenly recognizing this magical voice he listened to unconsciously when he was disembarked after the accident at sea, falls in love with this body that Ursula takes her place and wants to get married immediately. However, during the wedding, when the necklace that the sea witch imprisoned the voice in is broken, the voice finds its body, Ariel, and the little mermaid begins to speak. Thus, the prince realizes that the true owner of his love is Ariel. However, just as he was about to kiss her, the sun sets and the magic kicks in. In three days, because the prince did not kiss the little mermaid, Ariel loses her legs and returns to her mermaid form, the sea. Ariel will be the prisoner of Ursula as per the agreement, but King Triton does not agree to this situation and agrees to have Ursula take him as a prisoner. Meanwhile, Prince Eric jumps into the sea to save Ariel and begins to fight Ursula, who has turned into a huge power by capturing King Triton's crown. Prince Eric, riding the wedding ship on Ursula, kills Ursula through a sharp protrusion of the ship (like a phallus) and King Triton is freed.

King Triton can't stand the sadness of his daughter after Ariel returns to her mermaid form and uses his own power to transform the little mermaid back into a human. In this way, Prince Eric and the little mermaid Ariel get married and they will be happily ever after.

The original tale "The Little Mermaid", written by Andersen, has evolved over time into a version of the little mermaid marrying the prince, due to the popularity of Disney's adaptation. Thus, the narrative turned into the story of a young girl who gave up her own self by following her pure love, that is, a man, out of the mermaid's desire to have a soul. The film, which is a distinctive product of the mainstream cinema, has turned the tale completely into a love story and fictionalized a happy ending, with the aim of making the audience experience catharsis. In addition, the movie dramatized the conflict of the protagonist by adding a villainous character to the story through Ursula. In this section, based on Andersen's fairy tale, we will talk about where the movie *The Little Mermaid* follows the tale, at what points it differs, and what kind of interpretations these choices are open to. To summarize the differences that appear at first glance, it can be said that Ariel's desire to have a soul that will exist forever, unlike the fairy tale, has been removed from the narrative. The desire to possess the soul has been replaced by the desire to win the love of a man. This attitude means that the character's position in the eyes of the viewer is completely changed. In addition, contrary to the fairy tale, the sea witch Ursula was transformed from being an ambiguous character between good and evil, turned into a totally bad character with all her motivations, and the father's pressure and protection were increased.

2.1. From Infinity to Marriage

Considering that the main audience of these kinds of animated films, in which fairy tales are adapted, is primarily children, the messages that the fairy tale gives to the reader or the audience of the film should be evaluated by breaking it down into parts at the most basic levels. During periods when children are quite open to learning through observation and experience, they may be exposed to positive or negative influences from the tales they listen to or the movies they watch. "The fairy tale's proclivity at unveiling familial problems, whilst also showing children able to survive their experiences, consequently

functions as a powerful therapeutic device, according to some psychotherapists" (Short 2015, 115). As Short mentioned, the fact that fairy tales have such a helpful and healing function shows that they can also have a destructive function. According to Sue, however, this approach is not without its problems, including a tendency to make questionable assumptions that potentially distort our understanding of fairy tales in the compulsion to ascribe Freud to every scenario (Short 2015, 115). When children who are in the process of defining themselves and creating their own characters are evaluated through Short's statement that fairy tales have healing properties, it can be concluded that they may be influenced by a fairy tale they read or a movie they watch, and they may be inclined to identify themselves with the character. Of course, this is not just for children. Baudry refers to Lacan's mirror stage for adults to identify with the character they watch (Baudry and Williams 1974, 46). According to Lacan, 6-18 months old children recognize self and other through seeing their own reflection on a mirror surface and even in their mother's pupil (Lacan 1993, 33-39). Thus, the child can separate himself from the mother and the rest of the world and begins to recognize her/his own bodily functions. "I" is established for the child who encounters her/his own image in the mirror. At this point, Baudry likens Lacan's mirror phase to cinematic experience. In this instance, the audience identifies with the main character, who is fictionalized with the help of the camera's point of view. "I" defines itself through the character with which it identifies. According to Metz, in terms of cinematic experience, screen functions as mirror yet the only thing that spectator cannot see is their own reflection on the screen (Metz 1977, 45). For this reason, in the adaptation of *The Little Mermaid*, we will examine the decisions made by the character of Ariel, who is an identification object that will stick in the minds of little girls and women, during her transformation journey.

First of all, it is necessary to dwell on the representation of Ariel created by *The Little Mermaid*. Ariel is described as a very beautiful young girl with her impressive voice that will make anyone fall in love with her. With her red hair, slender body, glamorous smile, big eyes and her face that is constantly wearing make-up, Ariel imposes a certain perception of beauty on her audience. However, it may not be the right attitude to criticize the film directly on the basis of the perception it creates. Because, according to Elizabeth

Bell, when we look at the way the tales are written, it is possible to see how the female characters come to the fore with their beauty when describing them:

> The bodies of Disney's teenaged heroines begin as thumbnail sketches for kind and beautiful young girls in the literary tales. Snow White in the Grimms' tale is "white as snow, and as red as blood, and her hair was as black as ebony.... When she was seven years old she was as beautiful as the day" (1972, 249, 250). Charles Perrault first describes Cinderella with an "exceptionally sweet and gentle nature" who was "a hundred times more beautiful than her sisters" (1961, 58, 60)… Andersen describes the little mermaid, the youngest of six sisters, as "the prettiest of all, her skin was soft and delicate as a rose-leaf, her eyes as blue as the deepest sea (1945, 87). (Bell 1995, p. 109)

These definitions, of course, contribute to the decisions made by Disney in highlighting the characters primarily with their beauty. However, Disney does not hesitate to set the aforementioned beauty level quite high. Considering the view of the period on women, it is not surprising that a certain standard of beauty is reflected in the film. According to Bell, animated heroines were individuated in fair-skinned, fair-eyed, anglo-saxon features of eurocentric loveliness, both conforming to and perfecting Hollywood's beauty boundaries (Bell 1995, 110). Ariel fits these definitions of beauty in every way.

Figure 2.2: Ariel with her make-up from *The Little Mermaid*

Even if Ariel comes to the screen with her beautiful and sweet image every moment, this is not enough. Consider also Sebastian's advice to Ariel to win Prince Eric's love: "You must look beautiful, you must blink your eyes, you must make your lips look full." It is

also underlined through this scene that the only thing needed to win the love of a man is blinking eyes and having full lips. It is quite possible to realize that the only reason Ariel and Prince Eric fall in love is their outward appearance. Ariel constantly talks about Eric being very handsome, and trying to persuade Eric to marry Ariel is always about her beauty. The characters do not know each other, they are not aware of their good and bad habits. A beautiful face and a beautiful body seem to be enough for a marriage bond to be established in the movie. This approach may cause the perception of beauty to be prioritized for the female audience, who will identify with the main character, and for the male audience, who will replace the main character as an object of desire.

In addition to her beauty, Ariel has a very cute and curious nature. For this reason, *The Little Mermaid* looks promising at the beginning with its portrait of Ariel. Because Ariel follows this curious nature and her own wishes. Exploration is one of her most important driving forces. She takes a deep interest in the human world she does not know and is not familiar, and she follows her desires despite all the restrictions placed by her father. This promising character design undergoes a serious transformation as the film progresses. About this transformation, Sells says:

> First, Ariel's fascination with the human world becomes transformed into love for Prince Eric. Through this sanitizing maneuver Disney obscures Ariel's interest in the human world as metonym for access to power. Once she meets the prince, her curiosity is minimized and her drive becomes externally motivated rather than self-directed. As Ariel passes from her father's hands to her husband's hands, the autonomy and willfulness that she enacted early in the film becomes subsumed by her father's "permission" to marry Eric. (Sells 1995, 180)

This transformation is one of the most important points that separates the movie from Andersen's fairy tale. When we look at the plot of the tale, the little mermaid cannot win the love of the prince and prefers her own death by not being able to kill the prince, even at the cost of becoming a mermaid again. At this point, however, The Daughters of the Air take the mermaid with them and grant her the eternal soul she desires. In the fairy tale, the young girl does not give up herself, being herself only for love. The love she has for the prince and the desire to be with him are of course one of the main driving forces, but there is also the desire of the mermaid to have a soul, as well as the deep desire to cross the borders and break the rules. Trites argues that the Disney version subverts the mermaid's self-actualization process, and that Andersen wanted the mermaid to earn a

soul on her own, not as an attachment of someone else: 'Andersen offers women several paths toward self-realization, so the message to children is much more farsighted than Disney's limited message that only through marriage can a woman be complete" (Trites 1997, 150). The main idea that can be deduced from *The Little Mermaid* is that you always try to look beautiful and be beautiful in order to be liked, and that the purpose of this admiration is to win the love of the man and step into marriage, which should not be normalized through movies or the media in general. Ariel's curiosity about the human world, the collection she has accumulated and her desire to explore completely give way to her desire to marry Prince Eric. Ariel does not realize her own curiosities and different goals for life besides her marriage. From the moment Ariel and Eric meet, the movie makes Ariel's world look like it's made up of Prince Eric. Hurford makes the following inference about the gender roles represented by Disney princesses and princes:

> Girls learn to trust that their partners will be there when they need them, and boys learn to live up to that trust. They learn how to support an arabesque, how to lift and catch a girl, how to stop a pirouetting princess so that she faces the audience, and how to present her to their public as though she is the most important jewel in his collection. Adagio class is where the boys get experience in handling girls, and where girls get used to being handled. (Hurford 1987, p. 69)

This attitude, which is also seen in *The Little Mermaid*, transforms the character into a one-dimensional version. Ariel is willing to give up all the motivations presented to the audience at the beginning of the movie, including her family, fishtail and even her voice, just for Prince Eric, whom she finds handsome.

2.2. The Woman who Abandoned Herself

It should be noted that the world we encounter in Disney's adaptation of *The Little Mermaid* is divided into two. There are two different orders in the film, one real and one fictional/mythological. While the real one conveys the world order on land in which we all live and once ruled by kingdoms, the fictional one is the mythological undersea world where mermaids and witches take place and which has its own rules and management. "*The Little Mermaid* establishes the world on land and the world under the sea as two contrasting spaces, one factual and one fictive, one real and the other imaginary. In this

dualistic and hierarchical construction, the human world can be aligned with the white male system and the water world situated outside that system" (Sells, p. 177). In *Women's Reality* (1981), Ann Wilson Schaef prefers the term "white male system" to define the dominant culture of American patriarchy. Based on Schaef's interpretation, Sells describes the little mermaid's transition between the two worlds she experiences in the coming of age period:

> Those who are privileged by the white male system are oblivious to anything outside the system, while those outside the system know about the dominant culture as well as their own marginalized culture. These two contradictory myths speak to the relationship between the land and sea worlds: the sea world is rendered either invisible or mythic while the land world is endowed with cultural validity. As contradictory and complementary, the two-world motif creates permeable yet dangerous borders, furthers the plot, and establishes a hierarchy of desires. (1995, p. 178)

When we look at this mythical world established under the submarine, there is a more accurate distance from the human to the earth. The contact of the young mermaids with the human realm is not welcomed by the sea king, who is positioned as a father figure. While this system, which is divided into two, is geographically located above and below the water, it can also be said that this situation causes a hierarchical positioning. The world in which the white male system prevails is above, the order in which "the other" is dominated is below. We can define life on earth, which Schaef defines as the white male system, as Lacan's term, as a symbolic order. Tseelon also deduces "in order to gain entry into the (human/patriarchal) symbolic order" while describing the mermaid's self-renunciation (Tseelon 1995, 3). The character motivation that the little mermaid pursues throughout the movie is to switch between the undersea world and the symbolic order in which the law of the father/man is accepted. Of course, this transition has some costs. To list these costs; loss of family, voice, and fishtail. As Sells mentioned, it is necessary to make some sacrifices to ensure the hierarchical transition between the white male system or symbolic order, which is separated from each other with clear boundaries, and the undersea world outside (Sells 1995, 179). It is possible to say that the little mermaid has to give up the basic features that make her a mermaid and at the same time cause her to be marginalized by the symbolic order in order to be able to switch between two worlds. Even at the very beginning of the journey, she must meet with the scary sea witch Ursula, just to learn about the requirements she has to fulfill. According to Christine Fell, this

journey is the character's first test because it brings with it strong danger and fear (Fell 1967, 180). As a young girl, Ariel is no different from any teenage girl in her dreams, desires and fears. It is possible to put forward Dorothy Dinnerstein's evaluation of Andersen's tale for the Disney adaptation *The Little Mermaid* movie. Dinnerstein evaluates the relationship between the construction of the mermaid and the structural features of a human or a teenager girl of the same age as a mermaid:

> The first, and most ambivalent, image is the replacement of the mermaid's tail for human legs. The pain the mermaid experiences when walking with her newly acquired legs has a double meaning: the pain of independence and loneliness and the "special female pain of traditional sexual initiation". The second image is the sacrifice of her tongue and her voice. To become adult, the girl must relinquish her right to communicate her opinions and experiences as well as her creative talent. It also can refer to the image of emasculation; the tongue can connote the fantasy of an internal penis. The final image is the mermaid's search for immortality through marriage to the prince. Procreation is the only way that a female can achieve immortality. (Dinnerstein 1967, p.107)

As Dinnerstein mentioned, legs that replace a mermaid's tail are the price to be paid for a mermaid. This is a psychologically painful experience for the little mermaid who could not exist in the symbolic order with her unique structure and gave up her tail. However, Disney eliminated the physical pain emphasized in Andersen's tale in the movie. According to the tale, even though the mermaid has legs, she will suffer physical pain at every step, as if she were walking on swords. "Disney erases the pain of access by sanitizing the physical, bodily pain of Ariel's self-mutilation when she trades her fins for feet. Within the context of the first sanitization, and of Ursula's song about beauty and looks ("poor unfortunate souls ... this one longing to be thinner ... "), the legs indicate Ariel's compliance with the beauty culture, rather than her desire for access, mobility, and independence. Ariel becomes "woman as man wants her to be" rather than "woman for herself" (Sells 1995, 180). In the fairy tale, the little mermaid's pain through having legs can be interpreted as the pain of trying to be herself as a woman within the symbolic order, as Dinnerstein states. In the movie, Ariel is not interested in being herself. In order to win the prince's love, she aims to be what he wants. At this point, it is useful to remember the term "specula(riza)tion" introduced by Irigaray:

> Irigaray's notion of 'specula(riza)tion' is founded on her belief that the feminine has been trapped within a mirroring function within phallocentrism. Women have come to represent the reflection of the masculine to the masculine subject so that women and the feminine are

defined, not in their own terms, but rather in relation to specifically masculine attributes such as the phallus. In these terms, women serve only to reflect back an image of the male subject to himself. (Bainbridge 2008, p. 18)

It would be appropriate to evaluate Ariel's effort to exist in the symbolic order and to win the love of the man through "specula(riza)tion". Because Ariel is in an effort to reflect the desire of the man through her own body. It's not enough that the character largely conforms to the symbolic order's beauty standards. Ariel must also live on land to harmonize with the male and have legs instead of a tail that gives her the uniqueness. Ariel, who will gain value as long as she can reflect the man's desire in her own body, does not just confirm her self-renunciation through the loss of the tail. As a young woman, there are other costs to participating in the symbolic order's lines. This loss of Ariel, who gave up her tail, is not enough to comply with the symbolic order. Another, as a woman, will not be able to return to the world she belongs to, to the sea, because of the legs she is expected to have in order to adapt to the rules of the masculine world. Ariel, who will be separated from her father and sisters, is not interested in the fact that she cannot return to the submarine life she belongs to and that she will not be able to see her family. The only place she belongs now is Prince Eric's palace.

Figure 2.3: Ariel looks at Prince Eric after her transformation.

It can also be said that what is implicitly meant by the necessity of having legs is to have a vagina. It's not enough for the mermaid to just walk on two legs to win the prince's love. In addition to sexual pleasure, it is also necessary to have a woman's uterus and vagina that will ensure the continuity of the lineage. The necessity of the vagina, which is

implicitly reflected as having legs in order to win the man's love and marry him, is necessary to transform the woman into a "mother" as soon as possible. While this issue is not explicitly mentioned in *The Little Mermaid*, it will be explored in detail in the next chapter, as it is boldly brought up in *The Lure*.

According to Bainbridge, "Woman becomes the constructed other of the masculine within patriarchy, and outside this role, as we have seen, she has no meaning of her own or in her own right" (Bainbridge 2008, 23). Bainbridge says "With no means of autonomous self-definition, the mother is consumed by the maternal role. Little girls have no image of the feminine with which to identify. the mother is subjected to the Law-of-the-Father and to patterns of exchange; she gives up her father's name in order to take her husband's name: she has no name/identity of her own" (Bainbridge 2008, 23). The fact that she has a vagina and ensures the continuity of the lineage reveals the lack of experience of femininity with her own identity. Therefore, it does not seem possible to trace the woman in symbolic order. Irigaray says the following about the absence of women: "Psychoanalytic discourse on female sexuality is the discourse of truth. A discourse that tells the truth about the logic of truth: namely, that the feminine occurs only within models and laws devised by male subjects. Which implies that there are not really two sexes, but only one" (Irigaray 1985a, 86).

The other thing that the little mermaid Ariel has to sacrifice in order to comply with the symbolic order and win the man's love is her voice, her tongue. After falling in love with the magnificent voice that the prince listened to while unconscious, the only chance of getting to know Ariel is to hear her voice again. However, Ariel gives her voice to Ursula as a result of the deal she made with her. Giving up her tail, Ariel puts another of her most important features, her impressive voice and speaking ability, into Ursula's hands. The loss of voice and speech causes the woman to remain silent and unable to represent herself in the symbolic order. Irigaray coined the term "parler femme" to describe women's existence and representation. In this context, it is possible to evaluate what Ariel gave up on the situations represented by the speaking woman.

> Parler femme is intended to work on a range of levels: firstly, it provides a means of articulating the alterity of feminine desire by speaking through and for the position(s) of

woman; secondly, it raises the issue of where to locate the feminine speaking subject: it opens up the field of enunciation to include what gets excluded by masculinist patterns of discourse and representation; thirdly, it reveals the necessity of female genealogies for the production of the feminine as a position of enunciation and representation…Parler femme is a metonymic mode of language designed to insinuate the feminine back into the mechanisms of the production of linguistic and cultural practice. (Bainbridge 2008, p. 22).

As Irigaray stated, first of all, in order to reveal the alterity of the feminine desire, it is necessary for the woman to be able to speak. However, Ariel positions the male's desire in her own body by acting as a mirror, which is emphasized in the term specula(riza)tion, as opposed to revealing her own feminine desire. This is just another part of alienating yourself after the loss of the tail, inhibiting your own feminine side. "Parler femme" is the most important way for women to represent and be themselves. It is a way of women producing themselves even if they are in the patriarchal mechanism. Philosopher Margaret Whitford argues that women cannot be social subjects until they are subjects of language (Whitford 1991, 43). However, the fact that Ariel can be in the symbolic order results in her not being able to represent herself. "The loss of her voice is inscribed into her female body as that which is repressed within patriarchal culture." (Tseelon 1995, 3).

It is necessary to reevaluate the loss of the voice by taking Ursula as the center. Because Ursula is the only strong female character in the movie, besides all her frightening and being the villain of the movie. Although a grandmother figure is included as a guide in the tale, it is only Ursula who guides Ariel about the path she will choose in the movie. "Ursula is a revolting, grotesque image of the smothering maternal figure" (Trites 1997, 150). Regardless of whether Ursula is good or bad, her presence in the movie as a guiding figure gives Ursula a "mother" role, as Trites mentioned. Sells comments on the mermaid's renunciation of her voice: "Ariel sacrifices her connection to the feminine in the matricide of Ursula, the only other strong female character in the movie" (Sells 1995, 181).

Figure 2.4: Ursula from *The Little Mermaid*

It is thought-provoking that it is presented to the audience by drawing a very bad portrait over features such as making plans to avenge her arrest, trying to make the prince fall in love with her by stealing Ariel's voice. According to Sells, "of course within Disney's patriarchal ideology, any woman with power has to be represented as a castrating b*tch" (Sells 1995, 181). This combination of power and evil raises questions in the minds, and the conclusion for Ariel may be that it is easier to be loved and accepted by remaining silent than to be a speaking monster. At the same time, "it teaches us that we can achieve access and mobility in the white male system if we remain silent, and if we sacrifice our connection to 'the feminine'" (Sells 1995, 181).

The character of Ariel, fictionalized by *The Little Mermaid*, can create a dangerous structure for the viewer who identifies with her or positions her as an object of desire, with all her external features, always make-up, beautiful and sweet structure. In addition, as we mentioned above, the most important change is the reduction of the motivation of the character to the point of winning the love of a man beyond the motif of having a soul created by the fairy tale. After evaluating Ariel's renunciation of her fishtail and voice through social roles from a feminist perspective, we will examine *The Lure*, which approaches Andersen's tale "The Little Mermaid" from a completely different place and completely changes the usual mermaid portrait.

3. AN APPROACH THAT LIBERATES WOMEN: *THE LURE*

Agnieszka Smoczyńska's first art house feature film, *The Lure* (*Córki dancingu*, 2015), turns its camera to nightlife in Warsaw, Poland. The film focuses on the story of two mermaids (actually Sirens) who joins this glittering world during the 80s and 90s, when the nightlife in Poland was quite lively. This nightlife representation has been shaped to reflect the socio-political situation of Poland in those years to the narrative of the film. Adapted from Hans Andersen's fairy tale "The Little Mermaid" (1837), the film incorporates horror and musical elements at the same time, brings to mind examples such as *Sweeney Todd* (Tim Burton, 2007) and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Jim Sharman, 1975), differs from its peers in that it clearly reflects the elements of horror in terms of being adapted from a children's fairy tale. As I reviewed in the previous chapter, Disney's *The Little Mermaid* (1989) is significantly different from *The Lure*, although it is based

on the same fairy tale. However, there is an important difference in approach between these two films. In *The Lure,* Andersen's pure and good-hearted mermaid model, which saves the prince from death, replaces the Sirens we encounter in Greek mythology, unlike the Disney adaptation, and the Sirens come to the forefront as a wild and hunting mermaid type with animal teeth in the movie. While adapting the tale "The Little Mermaid" freely, *The Lure* stays true to the tale in certain respects. In the original version, the magical voice and singing of the mermaid image causes the prince to fall in love with the voice he hears, while in the film the magical sound of the Sirens results in the men falling in love with them and killing them. At this point, it is also important to have two Sirens instead of a single mermaid, because Smoczyńska, while trying to create a unity of womanhood also reflects the different versions of being a woman. Although one of the sisters acts more wild and self-righteous and the other goes after her love and desire, they act as a complement to each other. Considering the reasons such as the fact that *The Lure* is a much newer film compared to *The Little Mermaid*, and that all the debates on female representation have brought the world to a new point, it can be said that it is brave in creating characters that are freer and have mobility and can take action.

It should be noted that unlike the narrative of Disney's adaptation *The Little Mermaid*, which we discussed above, the approach of *The Lure* is different. It reflects a gender-neutral point of view, as it is a new movie made in 2015 and it is an arthouse movie. As a contrary to *The Little Mermaid*, *The Lure*, which does not follow the conventions of mainstream cinema and creates a free space for itself, does not need a happy ending. Although the film seems to introduce the audience to a familiar, masculine world at the beginning, the activity of the Sirens, being the characters that shape the story, and the different characteristics of two sisters come to the fore. This situation ensures that an approach that stereotypes the female figure is avoided.

Two young Sirens, Golden (Michalina Olszanska) and Silver (Marta Mazurek), meet a music band on the shores of Warsaw. They will give the impression of a family as the movie progresses, as this band consists of a young man standing next to a middle-aged woman and a man. Two sisters, who start singing to a young and middle-aged man in the music group to take them ashore, and taken to a nightclub by the bassist Mietek (young

man) and the drummer (middle-aged man), whose name is not pronounced throughout the film. Two sisters, Golden and Silver, who are introduced here to the boss of the club, possess all the features required by the human anatomy, apart from not having any genital area. Although they have body parts that connect their legs with their waists like humans and can be described as groins and hips, these regions do not have any internal parts such as anus or vagina. However, when the two sisters' bodies come into contact with water, their legs turn into fish tails and their teeth take on a frightening and animal-like shape. The owner of the club sees this change taking place in front of his eyes as a powerful show and wants Golden and Silver to perform at the club. For the two young Sirens, everything seems to be a pastime and their youth invites them to all kinds of adventures. Their only goal is to swim towards America after having some fun at the club. Therefore, they accept the offer. The audience at the club is very impressed with their first performance. However, it is not just the audience that is affected. Bassist Mietek also seems to have fallen under Silver's spell. Silver also responds to Mietek's interest and the flirting situation that tries to evolve into the relationship between them begins puts apart Golden and Silver. The two sisters are quite different from each other in terms of their outlooks and approaches to life, which are constantly implied until this point of the narrative, but not prominently revealed. As Silver gets closer to Mietek and desires to be human, Golden cannot suppress her urge to return to the sea and continues to seduce, hunt and eat men. This difference in their attitudes causes various arguments. While Silver has a human body, she does not have any sexual organs as mentioned above. Silver's genitals are located on the underside of the her fish tail. Because Mietek does not want to have sexual intercourse with a fish tail, Silver decides to have a surgery that will cut her tail and have human legs added to her body. At this point, we see that the sea witch in the fairy tale is replaced by a male character named Tryton. Tryton says that Silver will lose her voice if she has this surgery and that if Mietek marries another woman, Silver will turn into sea foam at the dawn of their wedding night. Despite all the warnings, Silver has surgery and Mietek experiences a distance due to the virginity blood coming from Silver's vagina during their first intercourse. After this separation, he decides to marry another woman he met in the process. On the wedding night, Silver will be free from foaming if she kills Mietek, as also informed by Tryton. As Silver and Mietek dance, she bares her teeth, but she does not have the heart to kill Mietek and turns into sea foam and disappears.

Then Golden jumps on Mietek, kills him by smashing him with her teeth, and disappears by jumping into the water.

First of all, after telling the story of the movie, to make a more general evaluation, *The Lure* follows the main points of the story by advancing largely in parallel with Hans Andersen's tale "The Little Mermaid", but it also differs from the narrative of the tale to the same extent. To mention the similarities, Mietek as a character takes the place of the prince in the fairy tale, while Silver takes the position of the little mermaid. The story line that progresses through Mietek and Silver progresses in parallel with the fairy tale. The mermaid falls in love with the prince and decides to give up her voice and fishtail to be with the prince. In this process, the presence of a sea witch, who informs her how this transformation will work, informs the mermaid what she will lose, and tells how to solve the spell, finds its place in the film. The sea witch is replaced by a male character named Tryton in the film. While mentioning the differences through Tryton, it should be underlined that one of the most important points where the film differs from the fairy tale is that it positions mermaids as Sirens. The mythological creature called the Siren is half human half fish, just like a mermaid, but unlike a mermaid, it is evil. A Siren uses her charming voice and appearance to hunt males. While presenting the mermaid representation to its audience, the film has turned the small, sweet, cute and beautiful young girl model in the fairy tale and the Disney version into a wild, uncontrollable and frightening figure in terms of preferring the mythological creature called the Siren. This frightening figure stands out not only for its unpredictable wild nature, but also for the physical appearance of the Sirens. Contrary to the bra on the scaly fishtail and the cool hair of the mermaids -like in Disney's version-, the Sirens, which have a very serrated or even barbed tail, also have a long and pointed structure that intertwines. With these aspects, it is possible to say that they have a completely frightening and animalistic appearance beyond being a sexual object. However, the film creates a binary opposition through the character structures of these two sisters. Under this wild appearance, Silver is more docile than Golden. On the other hand, considering the power of both Golden and Silver to continue the story and their mobilities, it is possible to say that the film reflects the different aspects of femininity to the screen in an integral way.

Beginning with the echoing sound of water drops, the film announces the importance of water and sound in the narrative to its audience, while transferring the credits to the screen with a dark animation, it is positioned as if it refers to Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, which is also adapted from Andersen's tale. The use of animation in the opening of the movie reflects the Sirens in a dark and uncanny sea to the screen and emphasizes the fairy tale, or rather unreality, of the story we will watch. The presence of skeletons and skulls in the animation is a warning to the audience that this tale will be a tense tale.

Figure 3.1: Golden and Silver from *The Lure*

The movie opens at midnight with the image of a dark and choppy sea. From the point of view of Silver, one of the Sirens, we see bassist Mietek. The film does not set up a story that first introduces the underwater world and distinguishes between humans and sea creatures, as *The Little Mermaid* does. It opens with the scene where Silver also sees Mietek at some kind of party/entertainment, which directly references the scene where the little mermaid sees the prince in the fairy tale. The movie gives the first signal that the siblings are different from each other when we see these two siblings side by side. As Silver looks at the singing Mietek with a smile, we see that Golden's gaze is relatively higher and harsher due to her positioning in relation to the camera. Two Sirens begin to sing with their magical voices. The song they sing tells that they want to be landed. Mietek and the other character, who is a drummer, start walking towards the sea in a hypnotized manner. Then, with loud music, the camera turns to the show in the nightclub. In this club, where women are positioned as show material, where sexy dances and striptease shows are held, the camera is in the eyes of the man and the female characters are

positioned as objects of desire. When we make an evaluation until this moment of the movie, the viewer may perceive that the Sirens need to be saved. Because it is these two male characters who save the mermaids. Then they are presented to a male boss, and the fate of the Sirens is again determined by a male character. Anneke Smelik in her book, *And the Mirror Cracked Feminist Cinema and Film Theory,* says that "The narrative structure of traditional cinema establishes the male character as active and powerful: he is the agent around whom the dramatic action unfolds and the look gets organized" (Smelik 1998, 10). It is necessary to keep the film separate from the definition of traditional cinema. Because this aspect of the narrative is often broken at the later points of the movie. However, at first glance, the setup of the world into which the Sirens enter is conveyed to the audience in this way. From the opening scene of the movie to the setup scenes that introduce the nightclub, the narrative gives the impression of placing the female body in the frame with the usual shooting techniques, point of view shots. However, this situation is actually a trap set by the film for its audience, just as the Sirens deceive men by singing. In order to make sense of this trap, first of all, it is necessary to mention what the male gaze is. Laura Mulvey uses the expression "to-be-looked-at-ness" on the fictionalization as the object of desire and the view that the man directs towards the woman and explains it as follows;

> In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to 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 cannote to-be-looked-at-ness. (Mulvey 1975, 7)

The masculine point of view that traditional cinema often resorts to while presenting the representations of men and women to the audience can generally occur in the ordinary course of life in the form of a man's positioning the female character as a sexual object and directing his gaze to her. The striking point in the movie *The Lure* is that the Sirens are both exposed to the male gaze in their daily lives and are exposed to the male gaze by an audience, mostly men, in the show they put on stage. This male gaze, which also exists in the ordinary course of their lives, is underlined twice, and the female characters are also put on the stage and are at a point where they cannot avoid a glance. However, the film does not deliver the active gaze to the man at this point. It does not place the Sirens in the passive and stared position. What matters here is the show itself and the active

structure of these two sisters. This is their show, and it's designed for their amusement, not for the pleasure of men. Smelik also states that women are objectified when evaluated from the perspective of the audience, and says: "The whole scene of representation is addressing an imaginary or ideal spectator who is implicitly assumed to be male. This assumption positions the woman as 'his' object" (Smelik 1998, 10). A different situation arises here. The female audience, who can show the reflex to identify with the male gaze due to her habits, comes face to face with a narrative in which female characters are active. As Smelik stated; "The spectator in the theater is automatically and often unconsciously made to identify with the male look, because the camera films from the optical, as well as libidinal, point of view of the male character" (Smelik 1998, 10). In addition, Mulvey mentions about narcissistic visual pleasure and borrows Lacan's mirror stage to explain this visual pleasure (Mulvey 1975, 5). Here, according to Mulvey, an analogy comes into play. Just like the child who looks at his/her perfect reflection in the mirror and establishes his/her identity through the reflection s/he sees, the viewer defines himself/herself through the identification s/he experiences in the movie s/he watches (Mulvey 1975, 5). *The Lure* does not present passive and vulnerable female characters to its audience. On the contrary, as the female characters of the film, the Sirens are the characters who take on the task of moving the narrative forward and can shape the story around themselves. If we need to go back to the meanings that the classical narrative structure ascribes to the male gaze, the aforementioned visual pleasure is established and operates in two ways. While one of them can be defined as voyeuristic pleasure, the other is experienced through identification. In both types of visual pleasure, the woman is either watched/observed or seems to act as a passive object that is not identified by the viewer. Smelik defines this situation as follows: "Both these formative structures depend for their meaning upon the controlling power of the male character as well as on the objectified representation of the female character" (Smelik 1998, 11). According to Mulvey, the objectified woman, who is the object of the gaze, also brings the fear of castration to the agenda of the man, although it is attractive and seductive (Mulvey 1975, 6). Because the presence of the woman reminds the male audience of the "penis deprivation" of the woman. Therefore, it brings into question the absence of a penis, or rather the possibility of loss. Classical cinema solves the threat of castration in one of two ways: via the narrative structure or through fetishism (Smelik 1998, 11). However, it should be noted that instead of solving

this fear of women and relieving the male audience, *The Lure* has preferred to carry the aforementioned fear even further. Up to this point, we have talked about the cases where the male gaze is directed towards figures that we can define as "female" anatomically. However, with the Sirens appearing on the stage as a form between human and animal in the movie I'm reviewing, we will have to put Kristeva's concept of abjection on our agenda in addition to the male gaze.

3.1. Siren and Abjection: Dangerous Woman Representation

Julia Kristeva, in her book *Powers of Horror* (1982), mentions about how women can be presented as an object of fear. Although *Powers of Horror* is adorned with psychoanalysis and literature, mythological elements or religious interpretations in general, the representation of women in horror movies is not very different from this approach. Being a woman, according to Kristeva, is considered an abjection in itself because of being able to give birth (Kristeva 1982, 4). Since the woman pulls out a human baby from her body. It violates the borders. It creates a second of itself, throws it out. "In the child's attempts to break away, the mother becomes an 'abject'; Thus, in this context, where the child struggles to become a separate subject" (Creed 1993, 52). Barbara Creed, in her book based on Kristeva's concept of abjection, refers to these female representations as "monstrous-feminine", which brings the concept of abjection to the fore, and examines horror films within the framework of feminism and psychoanalysis (Creed 1993, 28). At this point, the Sirens, who are at the center of the film, are half-human, half-animal, their teeth are exhibited in a monstrous way more than animal teeth, they eat human flesh, they do not come in contact with water and therefore have no genitals when they have legs, and sexual relations experienced through Silver. In terms of the fishy smell they emit, they will be evaluated under Kristeva's concept of abjection under this title.

3.1.1 Abjection: castration and vagina dentata

According to Kristeva, abjection "does not respect borders, positions, rules', that which 'disturbs identity, system, order" (Kristeva 1982, 4). Barbara Creed interprets this definition as follows: "In general terms, Kristeva is attempting to explore the different ways in which abjection works within human societies, as a means of separating out the

human from the non-human and the fully constituted subject from the partially formed subject" (Creed 1993, 43). The figure of the Siren can also be accepted as an abject, since it reveals a structure that transcends these boundaries and rules and creates disgust due to the distinction between human and non-human. This representation between human and animal, who hunts and eats people, transcends the borders, does not obey the rules, brings to light to abjection.

Figure 3.2: Golden and Silver's fish tails.

By examining Kristeva's definitions of abjection, Creed gathers the concept of abjection under certain terms. These terms are; "sexual immorality and perversion; corporeal alteration, decay and death; human sacrifice; murder; the corpse; bodily wastes; the feminine body and incest" (Creed 1993, 44). Although it has a half-human body, Sirens, who are close to animals with their basic instincts and the rest of their body, will experience a sexual intercourse with a human being is not much different from a sexual intercourse with an animal. For this reason, we can position the relationship of Mietek and Silver under the title of what Creed calls "sexual immorality and perversion". As a matter of fact, it should be noted at this point that the reason for Silver's decision to have surgery was not to have human legs. On the contrary, Silver has human legs but except vagina unless she touches water. In *The Little Mermaid*, the pratoganist's desire to have a vagina that underlies her desire to have legs is made explicit in *The Lure*. In order to have

sexual intercourse, Mietek needs to penetrate Silver's genitals, which we can define as a slit in the fish tail. This situation positions Silver as abject and positions the Sirens under the title of "monstrous feminine". In this way, through the representation of a Siren, the woman is at a point that is feared by the man. To go back to the beginning, the show performed by the Sirens in the nightclub is not only positioned as the object of desire of the male gaze. During the show, the sisters turn into fish by entering the water, which brings up the concept of abject, and this form of existence, which ignores the boundaries and rules, stands at a point that threatens the man. Freud basically mentions that the existence of woman threatens man in the purest form in two ways: "Sexual difference and castration" (Freud 1966, 274). And in exemplifying this fear, he resorts to the analogy that "Medusa's head is as scary as the mother's genital" (Freud 1966, 273-274). "If we accept Freud's interpretation that the 'Medusa's head takes the place of a representation of the female genitals', we can see that the Medusan myth is mediated by a narrative about the difference of female sexuality as a difference which is grounded in monstrousness and which invokes castration anxiety in the male spectator" (Creed 1993, 27). The reason why the head of Medusa is likened to the genitals of the woman is based on the fear of castration by the man. According to Freud, castration is about the rupture of the oedipal bond established between mother and child (Freud 1966, 273-274). To refer to Lacan, this break occurs when the child realizes that the mother does not have an imaginary phallus (Creed 1993, 11-17). The fact that the father has a phallus and the mother does not raises the possibility that the mother's phallus is castrated by the father's law. The fact that the mother does not have a phallus causes deep anxiety for the boy, as this leads to the conclusion that he may also experience loss of penis. "Freud linked man's fear of woman to his infantile belief that the mother is castrated. 'Probably no male human being is spared the fright of castration at the sight of a female genital', Freud wrote in his paper, *Fetishism* in 1927" (as cited in Creed 1993, 23). Sirens both bring up the fear of castration because of their being half women and underline the concept of abjection because they are half animals. For this reason, the fearful objectivity of the male gaze in Mietek's relationship with Silver or while performing at the Sirens' nightclub brings fear and disgust towards women as well as desire.

While adverting about men's fear of women, one of the prominent elements of the film, the teeth these sisters had when they were transformed should also be mentioned. These teeth are more like the teeth of a monster, a terrifying being, than the teeth of a human or an animal. These teeth, which have a long, pointed, forward curved and interlocking structure, have a frightening feature that allows them to be evaluated on the basis of the term "vagina dentata". Due to the deep connection of the vagina dentata with castration, it is useful to remember castration again. As mentioned above, castration, which can be defined as the fear of losing the penis caused by the absence of a woman's phallus, combines with the image of a toothed vagina over various myths. Creed said that about man's fear of castrating woman;

> The image of woman as castrator takes at least three forms: woman as the deadly femme castratrice, the castrating mother and the vagina dentata. Freud did not analyse man's fears of woman as castrator; in fact he seems to have repressed this image of woman in his writings about sexual difference and in his case histories. (Creed 1993, 41)

For this reason, it is necessary to define the concept of vagina dentata in connection with the above-mentioned fear of castration and the film examined in this chapter. Vagina dentata is also a kind of fear of castration, but this time the mechanism to castrate the man's penis is embodied in the woman's vagina instead of the father's law. This representation of the vagina, adorned with teeth, gives rise to the notion that a penetration could result in the loss of the penis. At the point of the emergence of the concept of the vagina dentata, Campbell (2000) said that "There is a motif occurring in certain primitive mythologies, as well as in modern surrealist painting and neurotic dream, which is known to folklore as 'the toothed vagina' – the vagina that castrates" (Creed 1993, 24). To give an example of the representation of the toothed vagina, which is the subject of the myths, "According to Barbara Walker, Yanomamo myths state that one of the first women on earth possessed a vagina that could transform into a toothed mouth which ate her lover's penis" (Creed 1993, 315). In addition, Creed completes it based on this mythological term vagina with teeth mentioned by Campbell:

> The myth about woman as castrator clearly points to male fears and phantasies about the female genitals as a trap, a black hole which threatens to swallow them up and cut them into pieces. The vagina dentata is the mouth of hell – a terrifying symbol of woman as the 'devil's gateway.' (Creed 1993, 318)

Besides the toothed vagina as a mysogenic myth, another myth at our disposal is of course the Sirens. When we bring the mythological Medusa figure, which Freud claims to represent the mother's genitals, together with all these, it is of course not surprising that the fear of women, which has been transmitted throughout history, is the subject of the film as a compact form (Freud 1966, 273-274). It should not be interpreted as a coincidence, as mentioned, that the sharp and frightening teeth that emerge as a result of the transformation of *The Lure*'s main characters are used in harmony with the term vagina dentata, which once again underlines the fear of women, and that it is combined with a mythological creature, the Siren. In general, the film disrupts the narrative and character structure of the fairy tale it is adapted to, both by positioning its characters as objects of desire, by revealing the abject through these positions, and by collecting this abject from different fields, specifically the fear of women. The film seeks to turn all the sweetness and purity of the mermaid, her nature giving up herself for love and trying her best to be human, by using all these mechanisms.

3.1.2. Abjection: corpse and food taboo

It can be said that the clearest violation of the border that can be described as an abject is a corpse (Kristeva, 1982). The corpse is still on the earth, but has lost its vitality. In *The Lure*, Sirens, especially Golden, often leave corpses behind. Once they are mistaken for corpses, they are thrown into the water. In the mentioned scene, the body of a man dismembered by Golden and the investigation into the corpse are televised. Silver gives Golden a look that says she understands that she committed the murder. All the people of the house were also worried about this situation. Silver, who does not want the situation to deteriorate because of her love for Mietek, gets into a violent argument with Golden. Then they begin to sing a nursery rhyme together that they probably said in their childhood, and they both start laughing and holding hands and spinning around. The drummer, who is positioned as the father figure of the house, enters the room and punches both of them in the face. These two sisters faint.

Figure 3.3: Silver and Golden after the punch.

Thinking that the Sirens are dead, Kyrisha, Mietek and the drummer throw Golden and Silver into a canal by wrapping them in a carpet. For Kristeva, in an overly hierarchized system with the threat of feminine power, the other gender, the feminine gender, is seen as a synonym for an ambiguous evil that needs to be eliminated. Golden, which emerged as a great feminine threat by killing and eating a man, and Silver, which was considered deadly because of its similar qualities, must be eliminated. At this point, Mietek vomits when the corpse chest comes into contact with the body. Because the body, which was the object of desire the day before, is now an abject as a corpse. Kristeva makes the following definition of the abjection of the corpse:

> Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit – cadere, cadaver. If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. It is no longer I who expel. 'T' is expelled. (Kristeva 1982, 3-4)

Complementing this approach, according to Creed, the corpse is the biggest pollution next to the wastes of the body such as feces, sweat, and long nails (Creed 1993, 46). According to Kristeva, considering religious approaches, the corpse is a source of abject in itself (Kristeva 1982, 4). "It signifies one of the most basic forms of pollution – the body without a soul" (Creed 1993, 47). At this point, while it is possible to mention about the

corpses that Golden left behind, we can also approach the definition of a body without a soul from a different angle. When we look at horror movies, we see bodies without souls as examples of abjection. According to Creed, characters such as vampires and zombies are examples of such uses of abjection (Creed 1993, 47). In this context, it should be remembered that Silver turns into sea foam when she dies. We find the meaning of turning into sea foam in the fairy tale that the film is adapted from. According to the fable written by Andersen, although mermaids live as long as 300 years, they do not have a soul like people who live a short life. When they die, they turn into foam and merge into the sea.

In addition to describing the existence of corpses or non-spirited bodies such as Sirens as abjection, Kristeva also mentions bringing milk and blood together or using them together as abjection (Kristeva 1982, 105-106). "One of the strongest of food taboos relates to the ancient imperative that blood and milk should be kept separate" (Creed 1993, 47). Kristeva says that about milk;

> What is implicated is not milk as food but milk considered in its symbolic value. Abomination does not reside in nourishing but in seething, that is, *cooking* the young goat in its mother's milk; in other words, it amounts to using milk not in terms of a need for survival but according to cultural culinary fancy, which sets up an abnormal bond between mother and child. (Kristeva 1982, 105)

According to Kristeva, milk and blood have a separate place in the distinction between pure and impure, which is often on the agenda in Judaism (Kristeva 1982, 105-106). The juxtaposition of milk, which is a bond between mother and child and which we can state as a symbol of birth as the first food of life, and blood, which evokes death and pollution, or being a substitution for each other, gives rise to abjection.

Figure 3.4: Krysha's fantasy

We can evaluate the representations of the duality of milk and blood through one of the scenes we see in the film, Krysha's fantasy that she fictionalized while having sex with her partner. In this scene, Krysha also has a fish tail and is lying in a field like a mother. Golden sucks one breast of Krysha, and Silver sucks the other. However, the fact that Silver and Golden are feeding on blood while living their lives creates a contrast with the sucking scene we watch and brings abjection to the fore. Because the main source of food for Sirens is human blood, mixing this feeding with human milk means mixing pure milk with blood that evokes death and pollution. At the point where the milk mixes into the narrative, the purity or dangerousness of the characters is also located in an ambiguous area.

Moving on through nutrition and food taboos, it should be noted that in relation to the horror film, "it is relevant to note that food loathing is frequently represented as a major source of abjection, particularly the eating of human flesh" (Creed 1993, 46). To evaluate it, it is necessary to mention that one of the main characteristics of Sirens is that they eat human flesh. Sirens, which fascinate sailors with their impressive sounds and beauties in mythology and then kill them by pulling them under the water, are positioned in a similar way in the movie. The only difference is that they do not kill their victims underwater after captivating them with their voices. We see that they prefer to eat their prey by tearing it apart with their teeth on land. They usually make their first move to the neck of the victim. Then they rip out the man's heart and begin to eat it. We see Golden killing people several times, while we only see Silver eating human flesh once. The only scene

mentioned is experienced as an outburst of anger, after they were punched by the drummer and thrown into a canal after they were thought to have died after fainting. The fact that we only see Silver once in the middle of a bloody murder, while Golden often hunts males, has to do with the different forms of femininity (such as wild, free and a woman who needs to be loved, naive and etc.) represented by two sisters, which we will discuss later.

While evaluating the film through the concept of abjection, it is necessary to mention the smell emitted by the Sirens. The first night these two come to the nightclub, the boss of the club goes around asking what this bad smell he is constantly smelling is. He goes to the kitchen and checks whether there is such an odor from the cooked food. In the distinction between clean and unclean, even as Kristeva gives an example from the caste system in India, people are divided into "touchable" and "untouchable" (Kristeva 1982, 79). It's untouchable, it's under the system, it's dirty, it smells bad, and it's abject. At this point, Sirens, as a feared female figure, stinks badly and sets an example for abjection once again. At this point, it is essential to clarify that the main characters, which are fictionalized in a way that contrasts between *The Lure* and *The Little Mermaid*, come to the fore. The main characters of *The Lure* are positioned as dangerous and abject beings to be avoided, unlike the protagonist of *The Little Mermaid* is drawn as sweet and charming as to be lovable and admirable for her beauty.

3.2. Two Sisters, Two Different Women

After mentioning the connection between the existence of the Sirens and abjection, I will continue to analyze the film within the framework of the event flow. As it can be seen, the characters are positioned as beings who are feared, pushed out and disgusted in the symbolic order because of their femininity, the scent they emit, their presence between the human-animal border, their wild teeth, eating human flesh, and leaving dismembered and disintegrated corpses behind them. However, it is possible to see that this disgusting situation also has dimensions. Now, we will mention about how the society evaluates the character traits of Golden and Silver beyond being Sirens, how the exclusion mechanism is established and the dimensions of disgust. First of all, we mentioned that when we first

saw the characters in the opening scene of the movie, Silver had a smile on her face and kept the same eye level as the characters, while Golden tilted her head and raised her eyes, looking at people with a look that could give the impression of a more uncanny. In the following scenes, we see that Golden generally stands in a distant and humiliating place in the relations between these two sisters with people. On the contrary, Silver has a warm and affectionate attitude as if trying to win people's love, she almost admires people. While Golden approaches their nightclub time as "having some fun until I go to America", Silver falls in love with Mietek and wants to be in Mietek's life enough to give up her own existence. While going on stage with the performance group they formed, the owner of the club touches all the characters with his leg on the way from the backstage to the mainstage, while Golden says "don't touch me!". Silver is satisfied with the life she lives and the innovations she sees. Golden, on the other hand, passes by a photograph of the sea in the nightclub and stares the image for a long time. She wants to go back to the sea. Silver always takes the first step in making people do what they want. While Silver, who is dizzy and fainted due to the events around her, in the musical scene where they are shopping, Golden watches her from afar on a window sill, accompanied by the camera movement from below. While Silver is a naive character who faints in front of what she sees, Golden is positioned at a high point through camera movement. These differences can be seen as more about presenting different representations of femininity rather than creating stereotypes and avoiding portraying women as purely wild or simply loving characters. While *The Lure* presents different representations of women to the audience, it is not concerned with activating or pacifying these different character traits. Silver and Golden's direct look at the camera emphasizes that despite their different characteristics, they both make their own decisions about the way they live their lives. In addition, one of the prominent elements in the film is the sexual orientation of the sisters. While it is possible to see that Golden is having a lesbian relationship, it is clear that she is also interested in Tryton, the sea witch. To claim that Silver is heterosexual or that Golden is bisexual would be to judge the characters within human limitations. On the contrary, I can claim that we see the genderless perspective of the film in the orientation of the characters. The Sirens are virtually genderless in the world the film constructs. Being with both a woman and a man can be considered as their normal. I can claim that the purely

heterosexual world constructed by *The Little Mermaid* is once again broken in *The Lure* and reconstructed through a genderless perspective.

Returning to Andersen's fable, the mermaid has two motivations for becoming human. One of them is to get the prince's love and live a happy life, the other is to have a soul and exist forever. Disney's adaptation of *The Little Mermaid* removes the second motivation and presents the mermaid's only motivation to the audience as getting the love of the prince. There are two sisters in *The Lure*. Silver from the sisters wants to get the love of Mietek, just like in the Disney adaptation *The Little Mermaid*. Golden, on the other hand, is content to be herself and seeks self-actualization as a Siren. She corrupts and overthrows the white male system. She reveals the active female figure among Mulvey's active male and passive female representations (Mulvey 1975, 7). While evaluating the difference in the character structure of Golden and Silver, it is necessary to keep in mind the identification of the female audience with the character. At this point, *The Lure* provides the audience with opportunities for identification and does not force the audience to identify with a single character trait. Multiple female voices heard. The film offers its audience a free space of existence as it gives equal space to both sisters and does not judge the choices of the characters.

Although *The Lure* is a movie that focuses on female characters, it often uses the male gaze. Throughout the film, we watch the positioning of the Sirens as objects of desire, with all their nakedness, from the show at the nightclub. As Smelik emphasizes, the female audience, accustomed to a passive gaze and "desire to desire", is also presented with a female character who struggles to be accepted by the society with which she can identify and gives up herself for the love of the man. However, the film constructs all these stages like a trap. Just as the Sirens sing a fascinating song and attract men to themselves and then strangle them to death, the film draws the audience into a world where they can comfortably watch through the codes and character structures they are used to from mainstream cinema. However, Golden, the object of the male gaze, kills men by tearing them apart, and the male audience, who is identified with the men who desire Golden, also comes face to face with death. Since the beginning of the movie, Golden wants to return to the sea and continues to live her wild nature throughout her life

at the club. She seduces, uses and manipulates men. She doesn't fit the molds that people, especially men, demand. She is wild, dangerous and unpredictable. She kills Mietek at the end of the movie, who does not respond her sister's love and marries another woman, and returns to the sea where she belongs. In its story, which it reflects on the screen using the codes of classical narrative cinema, the film traps everyone who looks at women as an object. The film argues that a woman should be herself no matter what, and that following her instincts is the only way out. In the duality created over the sisters, it provides equal screen visibility for both sisters, never turning the story into the focus of a single character. In this way, the film offers the audience two options to identify with. Of course, representations of femininity cannot be reduced to two options. However, *The Lure* shows that a representation of a woman pursuing her love and a character structure based on realizing her own self can both actively take place in the film.

3.3. Tryton As a Male Witch

In Andersen's fairy tale "The Little Mermaid", there is another prominent figure besides the mermaid and the prince: the witch. Witchcraft can be considered as an archetype that has survived as long as humanity exists. To examine the emergence of witchcraft it can be said that "The Sumerian word, ki.sikil.l..l..ke (or, ki.sikil.l.l.l.), was translated by Kramer as Lilith found in a Sumerian Gilgamesh fragment. In Assyrian the word is lilītu, feminine of lil., a female demon and enemy of pregnant women who should not come near a baby" (Riddle 2010, 14). Lilith is known as Adam's first wife. Since Lilith was created at the same time as Adam, it is believed that she considers herself equal with Adam. Lilith refuses to be with Adam and escapes by casting a spell. If we approach the present day from Lilith, the Middle Ages is the period when witchcraft came to the fore the most in human history. "From the fourteenth through the seventeenth century in Europe and America approximately one-half million people, more than 80 percent women, were burned at the stake as witches" (Riddle 2010, 139). The witch archetype, which has been told throughout history and is the subject of stories and fairy tales, is usually female. "The witch, of course, is a familiar female monster; she is invariably represented as an old, ugly crone who is capable of monstrous acts" (Creed 1993, 24). Joseph Campbell (2000) also draws attention to the positioning of women as castraters

and witches in his work in *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology.* Besides, "The only 'indisputably active role in the fantastic that is exclusively female' is that of the witch" (Creed 1993, 24). Almost the only female archetype who paints an active portrait in fairy tales or movies and can change the course of events is an old, evil and ugly witch. It is not accidental. The activity of witches, who are barred from being an object of desire for men because they are old and ugly, is malicious. The sea witch in Andersen's fairy tale is also a woman. But no absolute evil was attributed to the sea witch. She informs the mermaid about what will happen to her if she wants to be human, and casts the spell. When we look at Disney's animation *The Little Mermaid*, the sea witch is completely evil. She does her best to spoil Ariel's happiness and even uses her voice to make the prince fall in love with her. One of the hallmarks of *The Lure* is its positioning of the witch, who has an important place in the fairy tale and Disney's animation, as a man rather than a woman. Tryton is not publicly presented as a witch, but Tryton, a male mermaid, takes on the role of informing the mermaid about what will happen in the tale. Tryton does not cast any spells. Because Silver's transformation takes place through a surgery. However, Tryton informs Golden that her sister will lose her voice and that Mietek will turn into sea foam if she does not kill the man she loves at the dawn of the day he marries another woman. Thus, *The Lure* cuts off the connection between the tale and the animation from the witch figure that has been told throughout history. The female witch, which *The Little Mermaid* borrowed from the fairy tale and took it further in stereotyping, has turned into a pure evil with Ursula. The adjectives of bad, old and ugly woman attributed to the witch figure can be shown as an example of how women are evaluated by society at the point where they can be dangerous. Contrary to this approach, *The Lure* succeeds in revealing the existence of the uncanny man by completely changing the ugly female witch stereotype and ascribing the witchcraft role attributed to the woman to the male. Breaking the ugly and malevolent woman stereotype, film puts the mission of witchcraft on a man.

CONCLUSION

In this study, two films adapted from Andersen's "The Little Mermaid" fairy tale, Disney adaptation *The Little Mermaid* and Polish production *The Lure* were compared and analyzed within the framework of feminist film theory. While comparing these two films, I tried to point out that although both are adapted from the same fairy tale, they have followed strikingly different methods and the contrast of the modes of existence they attribute to women. While investigating the reasons for this difference, the factors that came across were also varied. First of all, it can be said that the Disney adaptation *The Little Mermaid* is a relatively old movie since it was made in 1989. When we look at Disney's approach, it is possible to say that it has undergone a change and transformation within itself since those days, and that Disney's approach at that time stood in a more restrictive place for women compared to today. *Brave* (2012, Brenda Chapman and Mark Andrews) and *Mulan* (2020, Niki Caro) can be given as examples of today's movies where Disney liberates female characters more. Since *The Lure* is a 2015 production, it is possible to say that it has witnessed the ongoing feminist debates from the past to the present and the change in the way women's representation is positioned in films. When we look at the period from 1989 to 2015, we know that the way women take part in films, the existence of female directors, and the inequality of wages started to come to the fore more. The increase in female directors and set workers can be seen as the most important factors that increase the rate of telling women's stories and the impressiveness of the narrative. It can be argued that the telling of stronger women's stories and the strengthening of feminist consciousness day by day liberate the representations of women we encounter in cinema, to some extent. In addition, while I was questioning the diametrically opposite worlds offered by the films to the audience and the difference in the main ideas they presented, another point I've come across is *The Little Mermaid* is a Disney adaptation that absolutely fulfills the requirements of mainstream cinema. On the contrary *The Lure*, on the other hand, can be considered as an example of low-budget, Polish independent cinema. It is possible to say that the existence of conventional differences, the design of *The Little Mermaid* in a way that will create catharsis for the audience, the need for a happy ending removes the film from the center of the tale and draws a frame suitable for the gender roles produced by the patriarchal system for women.

On the other hand, as an example of independent cinema, *The Lure* stands at a point where it is able to its characters look directly at the camera, breaks the identification and therefore ignores catharsis, with its structure that stays away from the requirements of mainstream cinema and breaks them. *The Lure* doesn't need any happy or sad endings, and it ends the movie in an open-ended way. While these two examples do not allow us to make an absolute comparison of mainstream and independent cinema, it can be said that they offer sufficient opportunity to evaluate the features they have in terms of form and content. Thus, the similarities and differences revealed by the strategies followed by these two films, which set off from the same fairy tale, are examined through feminist film theory.

Through a detailed contextual and formal analysis of *The Little Mermaid* in chapter 2, I argue that the film has moved away from the original narrative of the tale, especially with the chosen ending. *The Little Mermaid* has stereotyped the little mermaid in the clearest way possible. The character's beauty, appearance, sweetness and charm are emphasized both visually and through dialogues. The directors, who make their own choices from time to time instead of using the storyline presented by the tale, have eliminated the eternity search of the main character in terms of being the most important motif in the tale, as a major change at this point. Thus, the only motivation of the protagonist in the film was embodied as getting the man's love and getting married. This situation has been examined within the framework of feminist film theory and has been tried to be explained especially with Irigaray's specularization term. "Irigaray's notion of 'specula(riza)tion' is founded on her belief that the feminine has been trapped within a mirroring function within phallocentrism" (Bainbridge 2009, 18). From this point of view, the motive of the little mermaid Ariel to take the form desired by the man and thus to win the love of the man was shaped as the mainstay of the film. At this point, the film has largely moved away from the fairy tale it was adapted to and has emptied the desire to have an eternal soul, which has an important place in the fairy tale, and has replaced this desire with the desire to win the love of the man. As a matter of fact, it cannot be said that the fairy tale literally constructs a happy ending, the little mermaid dies even though her desire to reunite with a soul comes true. But Andersen does not seem to be interested in creating a happy ending either. When we look at the conventions of mainstream cinema, a strong

catharsis needs to be revealed in order to result in the identification experienced by the audience. Disney, which needs a new animation that we can consider as a blockbuster and will make a splash, seems to have found the blood it was looking for in the little mermaid Ariel. In addition, when we look at the conditions of 1989, it is seen that the feminist film theory, which is also the subject of the study, has been on the agenda for 15-20 years and studies have been developed. It does not seem surprising that the little mermaid was brought to a happy ending after the love of the man in this period, when we can reason that the echoes of the female representation were not taken so seriously and the male gaze was more unshakable. In addition, the mermaid Ariel has to give up her voice and fishtail, as in the fairy tale. However, the price to be paid by the mermaid is reduced here, contrary to the fairy tale. After having legs in the Andersen's version, this pain of the mermaid, who suffers as if walking on knives with every step she will take, is eliminated in Disney's adaptation. In addition, the grandmother figure in the fairy tale was removed from the film and the support of the mermaid's sisters for breaking the spell was not mentioned. Thus, the strength of the feminine support and bonds is weakened according to the structure in the fairy tale. Another difference between the fairy tale and the movie is the positioning of the witch figure. The sea witch in the fairy tale is not defined as good or bad. However, a villian is needed in the movie because of the conflict-based narrative that mainstream films build on. The character who is standing between the marriage of the main character, the mermaid Ariel, and the Prince Eric and causing the conflict, is positioned as the sea witch Ursula. Ursula, contrary to the fairy tale, is an absolute bad character. Her entire motivation is based on taking revenge on King Tryton, and the king's daughter Ariel is the perfect target for this revenge. In *The Little Mermaid*, which we can define as a mainstream film that does not allow any questioning and is completely designed to control the emotions of the audience, the characters are one-sided, all good or all bad. Ambiguities are not included. By portraying the male and female characters as beautiful and handsome, and the evil sea witch Ursula with a frightening ugliness, the stereotypes are once again confirmed through the perception of beauty.

While evaluating *The Lure*, I revealed, the similarities and differences between the movie and the fairy tale. Then, as the film is horror-musical, my analysis was directed towards female representations in horror cinema. Barbara Creed's monstrous feminine concept, which is based on Kristeva's theory of abjection, was useful in my analysis. For this

reason, while analyzing the characters in the movie, I evaluated them under different titles through abjection. Abject does not "respect borders, positions, rules', that which 'disturbs identity, system, order" (Kristeva 1982, 4). This definition, which Kristeva makes in its simplest form, is basically about the violation of boundaries, although the concept of abjection becomes more complex as it begins to be understood. Just as the disappearance of the border inside and outside the body is an example of abjection (such as the outflow of fluids inside the body, etc.), violation of a rule existing in the society can be evaluated under the title of abjection.

To touch on the main differences between the fairy tale and *The Lure*, I can claim that the most important change is that the plot progresses over two sisters instead of a mermaid, and these sisters are replaced by the mythological figure of the Siren. As mentioned in the third chapter, Sirens are evil beings, even though they are half-human, half-fish like mermaids. Sirens, which fascinate men with their enchanting voices and appearance, suffocate them after they drag them to the bottom of the sea. The characters in *The Lure*, on the other hand, are represented as creatures that eat their flesh, usually by biting their victims in the neck and killing them on land without pulling them under the water. The concept of monstrous feminine and abjection comes into play here. Creed gathers the concept of abjection under certain terms. These terms are; "sexual immorality and perversion; corporeal alteration, decay and death; human sacrifice; murder; the corpse; bodily wastes; the feminine body and incest" (Creed 1993, 44). Sirens, with their half-human, half-fish structures and instincts that threaten order, can be considered as abject characters that violate borders. In addition, The Sirens' eating human flesh, their bad smell, and the frightening and animalistic nature of their teeth can be seen as other features that are subject to abjection. For this reason, Golden and Silver stand out as characters that cannot be adapted to the order by men, are contradictory and are beyond the control of men. It should also be noted that the mobility of the characters comes to the fore. The characters in *The Lure* also draw attention as the characters who make their own decisions, shape the story and control the action.

Another element that I found in *The Lure* that it refuses to follow the line of the fairy tale is the ending it constructs. The situation where the character, who appears in the tale, does

not achieve the love of the man, but attains an eternal soul, ends with the death of Mietek, the character who takes the place of the prince by being completely reversed in the movie. I can claim that the "man" was punished for the first time, considering the different movie versions of the tale and the fairy tale's itself. In addition, it can be said that another character fictionalized by *The Lure*, different from the fairy tale, is the sea witch. In the movie, the sea witch appears as a male character. At this point, I argue that the film breaks the ugly female witch stereotype and reverses gender roles.

As a result, after evaluating the narrative structure of these two films and their differences with the fairy tale, it would be appropriate to compare these films with each other in order to reveal my main argument more clearly. As mentioned, Disney adaptation *The Little Mermaid*, being a relatively old production and following the mainstream narrative structure, created two-dimensional, all-good or all-bad characters, used parts of the tale that fit its purpose, and tied Ariel and the prince together in love to create a happy ending. *The Lure*, on the other hand, has highlighted the decision-making mechanisms of the female characters, their entertainment and orientation, which we can argue is due to the fact that the film is an example of independent cinema and has a greater command of contemporary narratives. Contrary to the happy ending of *The Little Mermaid*, *The Lure* preferred that the man be punished over death. While the woman in *The Little Mermaid* is in a passive and male-directed position and risking everything, including giving up herself for the love of the man, I claim that *The Lure*'s characters have an active structure that follows their own desires and activates the story.

The mermaid representation of *The Little Mermaid* and The Siren representation of *The Lure* are also located in a diametrically opposite place. Ariel in Disney's adaptation has a beautiful and extremely sweet exterior. However, with the songs in the movie, it is often advised to use her beauty in a way that men like her. Her make-up and glamorous structure at all times promotes a certain understanding of beauty. The male gaze almost leaves its mark on the film, and the female audience almost watches Ariel through the eyes of the male audience. The characters of *The Lure*, Golden and Silver, have different appearances than the usual understanding of beauty. Their nudity is not used as an element of sexuality, as in the scenes where Ariel's bra is not visible, only her shoulders and head are covered

and she appears naked. Their nudity is positioned away from the influence of the male gaze, reflecting the nature of being a Siren in their nature. It does not seem possible to talk about the existence of a female gaze either. The camera is involved in the lives of its characters from an almost genderless point. Opposite Ariel's sweet, human-like nature, *The Lure* pits Sirens, savage man-eating creatures. It is almost surprising that these two completely contrasting narratives are adapted from the same fairy tale. Unlike Ariel, who imitates people and wants to be like them, there is a female character, Golden, who uses people as objects, seduces them and then eats them. Starting from the same point, *The Little Mermaid* and *The Lure*, which are two proofs of how the appearance and character traits attributed to women can differentiate the narratives, show how the narratives are compared with the masculine approach of a mainstream narrative structure and the feminist and perhaps even genderless, gender-neutral perspective of an example of independent cinema. It shows on the screen that it can reach as many different points as possible.

Another notion worth considering is the difference between the sea witch presented by *The Little Mermaid* and the sea witch fictionalized by *The Lure*. *The Little Mermaid*'s Ursula is a sinister, vicious character who seeks vengeance and tries to use Ariel's transformation for her own benefit. Most of the movie is accompanied by Ursula's malicious laughter. Triton, the witch of *The Lure*, is a man. He is not after evil, he is just different. He attracts Golden's attention through his role in the movie and also gives Golden general information about Silver's transformation. He has nothing to do with the Sirens, he is one of the very independent characters of the movie. Triton is positioned quite outside of *The Little Mermaid*'s nasty, ugly female witch stereotype, as he is male and does not pursue evil. Here, too, *The Lure* seems to be trying to break the sexist approach of *The Little Mermaid* and say a new word about the male witch.

As a result, *The Little Mermaid* has compressed its characters into certain stereotypes and narrative patterns from a more patriarchal and sexist point of view with all the choices it has made from beginning to end. Ariel's beauty and goodness, her self-renunciation for men and beauty as the only important notion, Ursula's malice and ugliness underline all these stereotypes even more sharply. *The Lure*, on the other hand, liberated its characters

by making diametrically opposite choices, and built the narrative on their mobility. While Smoczyńska creating free and independent female characters, she was able to create an ambiguous narrative as far from stereotypes as possible. With a genderless gaze that replaces the male gaze, the film traces a structure that will emphasize that its characters are humanoid-animals beyond being men or women. Features such as being an example of independent cinema, being a current production and having a female director can be seen as the foundations to support this independent and ambiguous structure of *The Lure*. *The Little Mermaid* and *The Lure*, as two films adapted from the same fairy tale and following the same plot, have diametrically opposed narratives. This situation shows what kind of results can be caused by approaching the same story from different perspectives and having different aims. I can claim that two different productions, starting from the same fairy tale and following its structure, may have utterly opposite discourses with their own unique choices and completely different arguments, one that limits women and the other that liberates them. I can say that there may be different forms of femininity in two films based on the same tale, and that these representations may differ depending on the socio-political conditions of the period in which the films were shot and which convention they came from. Finally, it becomes more important where a story is taken and how it is shaped, rather than where it is based. Of course, although this comparison did not lead to a generally accepted conclusion, it allowed me to make an evaluation over two examples and to reach a conclusion specific to these examples. The result I have reached makes it possible to ask various questions. Every movie that follows the same skeleton can reveal completely different main ideas. It will be important to examine the approaches that reveal this difference. Again, when the mermaid tale is shot from a queer point of view, a different narrative can emerge. Of course, these points are open to question and may reveal results that can be evaluated through many examples. However, according to my thesis, it is possible to say that the differences I refer to through the two examples I have examined affect the representations of women in the films. Although the result of the comparison I have made has revealed an argument specific to these two films, it provides a basic example of the differences in approach between mainstream cinema and independent cinema.

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