

**Representations of Menstruation in Hollywood Films:
Carrie, The Blue Lagoon, Slums of Beverly Hills**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores mediated representations of a “particular experiences of women”: more precisely, to examine and critique the techniques by which menstruation is reproduced as a social text in a selection of Hollywood fiction films. On the one hand, social taboos have often encouraged a sort of “purposeful ignorance” around the question of menstruation. On the other hand, when menstruation is part of a media script the representations tend to be narrowly defined – offering limiting and often negative ways of thinking about women and women’s bodies.

The films selected for analysis provide an opportunity to evaluate and critique the ways in which Hollywood has portrayed women and menstruation. Through an analysis of these filmic texts it becomes clear that far from encouraging more positive perceptions of women and women’s bodies, the texts work to mystify, demonize and marginalize women – presenting menstruation as a problem rather than telling stories that integrate menstruation into the social order.

The theoretical framework of the thesis is drawn from gender studies and feminist media studies – especially emphasizing the value of textual analysis when engaging the storytelling techniques and practices of the Hollywood film. From the 23 films that engage the question of menstruation three films from three distinct genres (horror, drama and comedy) and produced between 1976 and 2010, are selected and analyzed using textual analysis. Textual analysis is used here as a means that supports a critical

evaluation of the filmic texts and not as an end. The central concern here is on how these mediated texts signify.

I construct an argument concerning the representation of women in general and menstruation in particular.

The three female protagonists in each of the films I will analyze below, Carrie from the film *Carrie*, Emmeline from *The Blue Lagoon* and Vivian from *Slums of Beverly Hills* are three leading female characters who experience their menstruation in the films. I show through my analysis that all depend on men empowerment and that for each of these characters, menstruation is a negative feminine experience that connotes weakness in patriarchal society. In Hollywood films menstruation is frequently displayed as a veiled sadness that is often kept secreted from others. This re-enforces the notion of menstruation as forbidden. Women usually submit to this taboo in their relationships with men and in the public sphere, which further encourages a sense of embarrassment, shame and guilt around the female body.

Keywords: Feminist media studies, Textual analysis, Gender representation, Hollywood, Menstruation

ÖZ

Bu çalışma “kadınların bazı deneyimleri”nin nasıl temsil edildiğine daha özelden adet kanamalarının bir toplumsal metin olarak Hollywood sinemasından bir seçki içinde nasıl yeniden üretildiğini analiz etmek ve eleştirmektir. Bir yandan sosyal tabular adet kanamaları konusunda “bilinçli bir görmezden gelme”yi desteklerken, diğer taraftan adet kanamaları medya metninin bir parçası olduğunda dar bir şekilde tanımlanmış, kısıtlı ve kadınlara ve kadın bedenine negatif bakış açısıyla temsil edilme eğilimindedir.

Analiz için seçilen filmler Hollywood’un kadınları ve adet kanamalarını temsil etme biçimlerini inceleme fırsatı vermektedir. Bu film metinlerinin analizi yoluyla kadınları ve kadın bedenini pozitif biçimde temsil etmeyi desteklemekten uzak olduğu görülürken, metinler kadınları mistifiye etmekte, şeytanlaştırmakta ve marjinalize etmektedir. Adet kanamaları sosyal yapı içine entegre etmeye yönelik bir öykü olarak anlatılmaktan çok bir sorun olarak gösterilmektedir.

Tezin teorik çerçevesi toplumsal cinsiyet çalışmaları ve feminist media çalışmalarına, özellikle Hollywood filmlerinde öykü anlatma pratiklerine ve tekniklerine dayalı bir metin analizinin değerini vurgulamaya dayanır. Bu çalışma için adet kanaması sorunsalını işleyen 1976 ve 2010 yılları arasında yapılmış toplam 23 filmde üç ayrı kategoride (korku, drama ve komedi) yer alan üç film metin analizi için seçilmiştir. Bu çalışmada kullanılan metin analizi yöntemi metni bir sonuç olarak değil film metinlerinin eleştirel değerlendirilmesini destekleyen bir araç olarak alır. Buradaki temel amaç bu medya metinlerinin neyi gösterdiğidir.

Ben bu çalışmada genelde kadınların özelde ise adet kanamasının etrafında örülen bir argüman kurmaktayım.

Analiz için Carrie, Mavi Lagün (The Blue Lagoon) ve Beverly Hills'in Kenar Mahalleleri (The Slums of Beverly Hills) filmleri seçilmiştir. Sırasıyla baş rol kadın karakterleri Carrie, Emmeline ve Vivian'ın ilk adet kanaması deneyimleri incelenmiştir. Analizimde işlenen tüm deneyimlerin erkeklerin güçlenmesine amacına hizmet ettiğini her bir filmde karakterler için adet kanamasının ataerkil toplumda kadınların bir zayıflığı ve kötü bir kadınlık deneyimi olduğunu göstermekteyim. Hollywood filmlerinde kadınların aylık kanamaları sıklıkla maskelenmiş bir üzüntü bazen de diğerlerinden saklanması gereken bir sır olarak sergilenmektedir. Bu durum adet kanamalarının yasaklanmış bir olgu olduğu görüşünü desteklemektedir. Kadınlar sıklıkla bu tabuyu erkeklerle ilişkilerinde ve kamusal alanda bir kadın bedenine ait bir utanç, ayıp ve suç yaşamaktadırlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Feminist medya çalışmaları, metin analizi, toplumsal cinsiyetin temsili, Hollywood, adet kanamaları.

*To My Husband Who is
A Part of Equitable World*

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The US film industry is a powerful global storytelling industry that provides the cultural materials that help to shape the way we see ourselves. Hollywood naturalizes “ways of seeing” and “points of view” by focusing and heightening everyday life, at the same time ignoring, marginalizing or demonizing aspects of it. We can see this fact in both the narrative structure of filmic texts and in their production values. Besides, one major concern for gender studies and feminist media scholars is the way that films reproduce gender roles and how they assign meaning to the roles of women in contemporary society. Feminist Media Studies Journal explain the issues is in the same vein in: *Gender, Media, and Activism* (Mendes & Silva, 2011), *Rethinking the Representation of Gender and Activism in Film* (Nikolaidis , 2011), *Teaching in the Field: Gender and Feminist Media Studies* (Probyn, 2010) and *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts* (Leonard, 2011).

Previous studies have consistently shown that women are extremely silenced in mass media; women tend to be stereotyped and marginalized within the narrative structure of texts (Scott, 1996, p.289; Sarnavka, 2003, p.91). When the filmic text does allow for resistance, it is extremely rare to find transformation and even less transcendence from one state to another (without the help, that is, of a male character).

While feminist media scholarship has focused primarily upon educating and advertising of menstruation (Merskin, 1999, p.942), little has been published on the subject of menstruation and the under-representation of menstruation within the structure of the Hollywood film (Briefel, 2005, p.20; Kakmi, 2000).

Menstruation is woman's body monthly bleeding, without which they cannot get pregnant. For women at the onset of puberty through to menopause, menstruation is a ceremonial, intrusive and unavoidable part of routine daily life: often determining the quality of life and how that life will be lived during the menstrual time. There has not been enough study done on the way this is dealt with in cinema.

In this work, 23 films made between years 1976 to 2010 have been identified. The significance of starting from 1976 is the first Hollywood film that includes representation of menstruation is on that year, which is *Carrie*. From these 23 films, three of them will be specifically chosen for in textual analysis. Also I will draw preferably on sequences from the other films to support the argument that I intend to make.

Hollywood films purposefully narrate a range of behaviors associated with both lifestyle and life struggles of women. Furthermore, Hollywood films can play a leading role in shaping perceptions and attitudes toward women and menstruation. Because of the taboos against discussing menstruation publicly, the cinema can be a major source of information for young females and males.

As there are beliefs that claim menstruation is a historical, social and cultural taboo, media representations of menstruation are not a normal and natural subject. In communication and media studies literature where feminist media studies scholars talk about the relationship between mediated representations and our perceptions of ourselves and others, we can recognize how filmic texts affect awareness of sex and its aspects (Probyn, 2010; Mendes & Silva, 2011; Nikolaidis, 2011; Leonard, 2011). Hollywood films offer narrow opportunities rather than a wide range of ways to think about menstruation. Mostly the films ways of focusing on menstruation is on adolescence and there is lack of representing it in different age ranges. Beside menstruation issues for adolescence filmic texts could have also represented, how is menstruation for adult women and menopause women? Are there difficulties for them as well as teenagers? If yes, what are the difficulties? How do mature people think about menstruation? How they face it? What is their feeling about women monthly period? What is men point of view about menstruation and how they treat it? And so on...

There is a broader implication which is, menstrual cycle as many other aspects of women's life are under construction of patriarchal society to control women and fit them in male dominated world. We need to consider the "micro-practices" of everyday life where we all contribute to the production and reproduction of unjust relationships of power between men and women. In this way the current work and future related ones are hopeful possibility that we can also work to change the negative assumptions against menstrual cycle.

This study will measure the truth value of the filmic texts. To do so the study sees menstruation in the mediated representations as a story and then explores how many different ways Hollywood tells that story, not against some true but in terms of narrow or wide range of ways to think about women's lives and bodies.

Menstruation is not represented as a normal and natural subject in Hollywood representations and mediated representations do not emphasize menstruation as something natural on women body system, in contrast to this, they view it as a negative corruption. To conclude, there is lack of representation of menstruation in different ages in Hollywood. The dominant connection between Hollywood representations and menstruation is for showing coming of age girls' anxieties and their bodies' development.

In the next chapter of this study, the method of the research and the selection of the samples which was also part of my method will be explained. In addition research questions will be provided.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature that summaries the theoretical framework for current work consist of four sections. In first section feminisms, body and menstruation is discussed. Second section explains the background of the taboo. The third section provides the information about menstruation, patriarchal society and media. And, fourth section gives information regarding sex roles.

2.1 Feminisms, Body and Menstruation

Definition of feminism has had many scholarly points of view. As Chris Barker (2008) explains:

Feminism is a plural field of theory and politics that contains competing perspectives and prescriptions for action ... In general terms, we may locate as asserting that sex is a fundamental and irreducible axis of social organization which, to date, has subordinated women to men. Thus feminism is centrally concerned with sex as an organizing principle of social life where gender relations are thoroughly saturated with power (p. 24).

In order to define feminism, Barker explains it is phenomena concerns with how social are saturated with power relations between women and men in society. This work will also look at power relations between female characters who experience menstruation and their male relatives to find connection between menstrual cycle and marginalization.

Lois Mcnay in her analysis of Foucault's 'Power, Body and Experience' (1992, p. 16) states "it is Foucault's notion of the body as the point where power relations are

manifested in their most concrete form which, in the last few years has made a significant contribution to feminist thinking on the body” (1992, p. 16). menstruation as a notion of body is concerned in power relation between men and women. McNay points out that:

One of the most important contributions of Foucault’s theory of the body has made to feminist thought is a way of conceiving of the body as a concrete phenomenon without eliding its materiality with a fixed biological or pre-discursive essence. The problem of sexual difference is one that has preoccupied female theorists” (1992, p. 17).

In this particular study, I will look at menstruation as a concrete phenomenon of female body in the films. The ways menstruation is treated in filmic texts and its consequences will be discussed, without ignoring it with stable principles and beliefs.

Freeland cites Laura Mulvey's point in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (Mulvey, 1975) that “the feminists claim that men and women are differentially positioned by cinema: men as subjects identifying with agents who drive the film’s narrative forward, women as objects for masculine desire and fetishistic gazing” (1996, p.5). These are aspects by which feminist film theory is established.

Paula Saukko and Lori Reed in *Governing the Female Body* (2010, p.1) give overall aims of second wave feminism: `

... The second-wave feminist movement’s goal was to bring to the surface and challenge long-sedimented patriarchal myths, such as the association between menstruation and shame, which layered women’s sense of themselves. The aim was to pave the way for alternative or more emancipatory modes of relating to the female self, body, and health.

The difference between second and third wave feminist approaches to menstruation is that second wave feminism does not see menstruation as empowering while third wave does.

Third-wave feminism has had many scholarly definitions. According to Judith Lorber (2005):

Third-wave feminism plays with sex, sexuality, and gender. In that sense, it is similar to postmodern feminism. It is inclusive of multiple cultures and men, and so continues multicultural/multiracial feminism and feminist studies of men. But it is rebellious when it comes to radical feminism. It rejects the sense of women as oppressed victims and heterosexual sex as dangerous. It does not valorize mothers or the womanly qualities of nurturance, empathy, and care-taking. Instead, third-wave feminism valorizes women's agency and female sexuality as forms of power.

According to third wave feminism menstrual activism is an aspect of women's agency which represents the notion of struggle and multiple meanings. The refusal of menstruation to be 'contained' in society as a routine aspect of life can be considered as oppression of women agency.

Chris Bobel (2010) in her book points out third wave feminism and the politics of menstruation. Bobel argues that menstrual activism is a good example of third-wave feminism and simply an exotic sub-movement.

Her account of menstrual activists is a study of third-wave feminism; moreover, its conflicts and contradictions, especially around gender versus woman. Her book is about

feminism in change. They embrace women's menstruating bodies as beautiful and powerful. They use menstruation for separating physiology from social identity. And, they include anti-consumerists and environmentalists in menstrual activism. Therefore, menstrual activism is very much part of the feminist third wave.

Bobel's complete explanation of the movement is therefore an outstanding starter into understanding in what way current feminists do feminism.

According to Bobel, third wave feminist deeply cares about living feminism in daily activities, including choosing products to use during menstruation. Because of that, menstrual activism illustrates third wave feminism since it has feminist spiritualists. Menstrual activists are against the mainstream commercial products most menstruators¹ use. Besides, they claim menstruation is an empowering, healthy and pleasurable experience for women.

In addition, in this line, another menstruation-centric book is *Flow* (2009) which is a cultural story of menstruation. According to the book, Elissa Stein and Susan Kim point out, "The stages of our lives are in a sense defined by where we are on the menstrual time line" (2009, p.15). The book clarifies how women's issues have been treated by society over the years. Menstruation kept quiet phobia and taboo within the media. Mediated representations have been sending false messages that menstruation is embarrassing, inconvenient and non-hygienic. While in reality whether it is time for

¹ Some radical menstruation activists use it to signal that not all women menstruate and not only women menstruate. Think of post-menopausal women (who don't) or trans men (who do).

going through puberty or to have a child or menopause, these significant instants in a women's life are turned around menstruation. Part of my method is to underline the way that the mediated/filmic texts 'make history' – but 'story telling' around the issue of menstruation and how many different ways Hollywood has of telling the story of menstruation.

2.2 Background of the Taboo

Historical and religious stories' can affect many parts of representations on film industries. Seeking on religion, history and film industry are main issues in this work. Similarities between historical and cultural contexts on menstruation can be an aim for compare the related studies in this study.

An aspect that Tarja S. Philip in her book 'Menstruation and Childbirth in the Bible' (2006) identifies about menstruation is 'impurity of menstruation' which reflects the focus of most discussions regarding menstrual cycle. Exploring the meaning of "impurity" in the text as something "unnatural" also is a part of my method.

Philip argues that when reading interpretations and research of menstruation and childbirth one feels that their impurity has been greatly emphasized, while their other aspects, like fertility have been neglected. The aspect that Philip identifies about menstruation is 'impurity of menstruation' which reflects the focus of most discussions regarding menstrual cycle.

In the case of impurity of menstruation there is an important source which is Mary Douglas's book 'Purity and Danger'. Mary Douglas argues throughout the period of

menstruation they would be in a situation of power and danger. Douglas points out the importance of seeing menstruation as, both danger and power are properties of menstrual cycle; menstruation is seen as both danger and power, perhaps the power has to be neutralized in the text or demonized or marginalized. This is another aspect of my “methodological search” through the filmic texts. According to Douglas (1966) menstruation has been perceived one of dangers and pollutions for mankind over time. Even though, it is actually a ‘cleansing’ process for women. This is something that Douglas provides, as we think through the argument being made. And, Douglas is contributing at the time of menstruation, women are considered marginal. Furthermore, Douglas argues that throughout the period of menstruation, women are told “powerful” and “dangerous”. Drawing on Douglas it is possible to see how the narrative in the selected Hollywood texts work to neutralize the power of women, perhaps the power has to be neutralized in the text or demonized or marginalized. Considering menstrual cycle as a disorder Douglas states that “Granted that disorder spoils pattern, it also provides the material of pattern. Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used.” (p.35) the same thing applies for Hollywood films, from all possible materials, Hollywood draws upon a limited selection of stories about menstruation. She points out:

So, disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realized in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. This is why, though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognize that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality. It symbolizes both danger and power (Douglas, 1966, p. 95).

Value of the insight for analysis of the films is when we see limited patterns, like those in Hollywood films which are selected for this thesis, tells us that power is at work. Not that they are false or not true but that they are too negative and too limiting.

Delaney, Lupton and Toth (1988) in their book about cultural history of menstruation point out that taboos exist to protect human beings from danger.

In many societies, the menstruating woman is believed to emit a mana, or threatening supernatural power. The taboos of menstruation are practices that help others to avoid her and her dangerous influence and that enable her to get through the menstrual period without succumbing to her own deadly power (Delaney, Lupton & Toth, 1988, p. 7).

So, concepts of supernaturally that are referred to some adolescence girls in Hollywood films are actually from broader context which is fear of menstruation. In those films first menstruation was the start of browsing supernatural power for the teenager characters. These are evidence of inequality, unjust social practices, marginalization of women, the narrow roles and stories told about menstruation in Hollywood. Aviva Briefel in 'Monster Pains' compares male masochism characters in films with female menstruation in the horror films;

While male monsters wound themselves before turning to violence, female monsters menstruate. Violence in the horror film is often initiated by the female monster getting her period, an event that is either suggested or overtly displayed. Carrie and John Fawcett's teenage-girl werewolf film, *Ginger Snaps* (2000), both graphically show their female leads' menstruation as a precursor _or even a prerequisite_ to their committing acts of violence (2005, p.21).

Menstruation in both movies *Carrie* (1976) which is one of the Hollywood films that will be discussed and *Ginger Snaps* (2000) that is a Canadian film is the pre essence to get power and be a danger for their societies.

2.3 Menstruation, Patriarchal Society and Media

In field of health, Janice M. Campanelli (2010) in her thesis 'The Menstrual Cycle is All Month Long', as a qualitative feminist analysis explained women's experiences of menstruations. She emphasized that women find out more information about themselves that they did not know before as they become more conscious about the experience of menstrual cycle, and stated that, awareness might help to make decision for well-being:

Women may find that they are more aware of what they are feeling or what they need at certain times of the month and are able to care for themselves better because of this awareness. In a positive way, some women will know that they need more sleep or benefit from exercise or perhaps time alone during different phases of the menstrual cycle (Campanelli, 2010, p.5).

Indeed Campanelli explains "the creation of art as part of the discovery process helps facilitate expression that may be stymied through narrative alone." Movie as an art can affect the way in which women feel and experience their menstrual cycle; the way that this concept is generalized and represented can cause convenience or annoyance for the one who face it. Women must to be conscious about the various aspects of representing their monthly menstruation to change their disorders regarding it as female subjects. This awareness is requirement of all actions to change unfair and imbalanced representation of the issue.

There are feminists who have been trying to break the taboo and raise questions about the issue;

... More generally, a focus on menstruation is part of a complex and enduring feminist project of loosening the social control of women's bodies, of working to

move women's bodies from object to subject status—something absolutely foundational to a host of contemporary issues, from human trafficking to eating disorders to sexual assault (Bobel and Kissling, 2011, p.123).

So, focusing on the filmic texts is a way of challenging taken-for-granted assumptions about women's bodies. To help move them from 'object' to 'subject' Smelike (1998) expresses a term known as "female subjectivity"; which can be advantageous to apply a crucial view of the organization of female subjectivity and sexual difference in the films that characteristics of society controlled by men. Smelike (1998) uses Foucault's subjectivity term then argues this is procedure of "becoming and not being". As this applies for the films which I have chosen; 22 films out of 23, structure female subjectivity though at least 11 films among them pay attention to the subject of becoming woman by having first menstrual cycle. Subjectivity as an effective case is vital in order to alter women roles in films.

"We are not only subjected to power; we also have the potential and the power to become a subject different from the one we were socially programmed to become if only we want to, and if the social circumstances are favorable. The process of becoming-subject is taken up in a network of power relations of which sexual difference is a major constitutive factor along others like race, class, sexual preference, age"(Smelike, 1998, p.2).

He points out that set of knowledge as well as external circumstances result in subjectivity. Also, the certain involvement of menstruation in films effects on woman's subjects. In order to change the female subjects regarding menstruation in movies, women's knowledge and routines of it need to be changed. Smelike states feminism is involved in development of changing by process of different plans, different symbols also different storylines; it has shaped the different social subject of women.

Bobel and Kissling (2011) in their article about representations of the menstrual cycle quote Burke's idea that our reality (and menstruation as a reality) 'in the twenty-first century is shaped not only by books, maps, magazines and newspapers, but e-mail, websites, television, films, texting, and the interaction among these diverse media.' Bobel and Kissling discuss many issues about representation of menstruation, including: "how women internalize destructive messages, from media, which are represented unjust, about womanhood, and its embodiment, including notions of our bodies as messy, unruly things (yes, things) that need to be tidied up, medicated, plucked, smoothed, and trimmed" (pp. 122-123). in the movies the female characters and their female relatives are the one who are responsible and in charge of having control of their bodies' flowing and being careful to do not being noticed by others especially male characters. Anxiety of being noticed by others while having unexpected menstrual flow, and trying to find a way to get rid of it is common representation regarding this issue in films.

Chris Bobel and Elizabeth Arveda Kissling (2011) examine the talking about and revealing menstruation, "shattering age-old taboos" of secrecy regarding female biology. They state that sometimes revealing menstruation is more shocking than the taboos and secrecy of it. Bobel and Kissling claim that, we must not merely to challenge taboos and restrictions, but also talk about menstruation and make it a natural and normal thing to talk about in society.

Negative attitudes and stereotypes in films, cinema and mediated representations applied toward women by the dominant group in our society places women with menstrual cycles in a position that is marginalized and stigmatized.

"To have been in the margins is to have been in contact with danger, to have been at a source of power. It is consistent with the ideas about form and formlessness to treat intends coming out of seclusion as if they were themselves charged with power, hot dangerous, requiring insulation and a time for cooling down" (Douglas, 1966, p. 98).

She provides a sample of the tendency to understand menstruation by means of polluting in the world which request severe separations among male and female characters.

Additionally, in this line, Mitchell C. Gardner (2007) in his thesis 'Understanding Men's Attitudes about the Menstrual Cycle' point outs the two major findings that men's knowledge was incomplete and sometimes inaccurate, as well as focused on the negative aspects of menstruation. Same thing goes for the films, when male characters face to the issue. Confusion, fun, laughter, fear and incomplete knowledge are major response of male characters. The audience for most of the films I analyze is also made up of men whose knowledge may not be challenged but instead re-enforced by the ways of recreations of the issue in films, the ways which have been supporting by the role of patriarchy in diminishing women, the supposed threat of the menstruating woman and the resulting of silence, embarrassment and taboos about the menstrual cycle. This is important, whether the film challenges or reinforces and reproduces ways of acting or seeing or thinking in the world.

Kira Allmann (2008) in a research about the lexicon of patriarchy in Islamic menstrual ritual identifies “women become the focal point in examples of patriarchal oppression, and social customs that deal directly with women, such as menstrual rituals, face severe scrutiny.” However, social customs in the Hollywood films that have been considered in this study represent menstruation according to Christian religion. While all women throughout the world experience menstruation, it is rarely expressed as a uniform experience in different cultures. So, while the practice is universal, the meanings that have been constructed around it are not. Always-contestable ‘constructs’ are being built and unbuilt.

Patriarchal perspectives have been entrenched in human society through the semantic association of symbols with meaning. A ritual vocabulary that factitiously defines femininity and further ensures the preservation of patriarchy worldwide has developed from the exegesis of religious texts and metaphorical language dealing with concepts of menstruation, blood, purity, and sanctity (Allmann, 2008, p. 29).

In case of the films in which religious contexts are given for menstrual cycle it is considered as unwanted and impure curse. According to Kira Allmann “menstruation is consistently addressed in interpretation as an event that makes women “impure” and therefore requires ritual acts of lustration” (2008, p.30). She cited:

Menstruation, a biological occurrence beyond the influence of personal will, directly threatens that control. Still, no accurate generalizations can be made about rituals or behavior in Muslim society as a whole because a vast range of menstrual taboos manifest themselves differently across developed and tribal societies (p. 30).

Kira points out “The association of menstruation with danger is not restricted to one culture or situation” (2008, p.31). Menstruation have been represented as danger or considered causing danger frequently in films, in different situations.

2.4 Sex Roles

Debra Merskin (1999) claims contemporary commercials aimed at feminine hygiene products still reproduce, in part, some of the centuries-old myths and taboos related with women’s bodies. Merskin suggests much of the wisdom surrounding menstruation is a historic and traditional construction built from the important features of taboo. It led to “in American life, Puritanical notions of impurity, shame, and fear have been used to physiological control the activities of girls and women” (p.955). All those lore surrounding menstrual cycle are supported and represented in films which are structured and organized in the society.

Eagly and Wood (2011) in their article about feminism and the evolution of sex differences and similarities point out that the discussion among proponents of most evolutionary psychologists and most feminist psychologists reflect different opinions of altering patriarchal domination to gender-equal in gender relations. Eagly and Wood discuss “neither feminist psychologists nor evolutionary psychologists have uniform positions.” They suggest:

Questions about how and if women and men differ are still under negotiation in the articles... (And) other research related to evolutionary and feminist psychology. Clearer conclusions would be fostered by standardized metrics for representing male-female comparisons, more varied research methods for assessing both psychological and biological processes, greater diversity in populations sampled, and more researcher openness to taking into account findings that challenge their theories. ...we propose an integrative evolutionary

framework that recognizes human culture in both ultimate and proximal causes of female and male behavior (Eagly & Wood, 2011).

In case of movies, there are filmic texts in which menstrual cycle of women is considered as a privilege for women while in some others it is considered as men's privilege for not having it. In one hand, from the point of view of women characters it is shown as something that limit them while on the other hand, from men characters' point of view it is a privilege for women.

Stephanie Saul in her article 'Pill That Eliminates the Period Gets Mixed Reviews' quotes from Giovanna Chesler that "Women are not sick, they don't need to control their periods for 30 or 40 years" (2007, p.2).

Giovanna Chesler (2011) in her article examines the documentary of Diana Fabianova in the year 2010. Chesler identifies the taboo and complexity of the subject of the menstrual cycle makes it difficult for work to reach an audience on a broad scale.

"Eighty percent of women suffer either physically or psychologically during menstruation...In other words, millions of women on earth are unhappy, and yet the silence is deafening" (Fabianova, 2010). Giovanna Chesler cites Diana Fabianova's posits regarding her series of interviews with menstrual cycle researchers and journalists: "Religion, Science; Politics; International Corporations; It seems that everyone has a stake in making women feel dissatisfied with themselves" (2010). Media as another part of patriarchal society that has been ruled, controlled by men and has been male dominated, is one of the popular sources by which women has been guide to how

feel about themselves and how act as female; menstruation is one of the women issues that still is marginalized and invisible in films, in this particular study I tried to point out the necessity of making an argument about the issue in movies. Most of the time in films menstrual cycle is portrayed as a weakness point in women's body that must be controlled and be invisible from society.

In the films aiming sex education there are many studies about menstrual cycle of women. Media and education, or media and the production of knowledge play a significant role in sex 'education'. In this way, 'sex education' becomes a component of a broader social program in other words socialization process. According to Bellafante in her article 'Facts of Life, for Their Eyes Only' (2005), throughout the 50-plus years that sex education films have tried to decode the secret of puberty, the movies restrict themselves to the topics of growth and menarche, not ever allocating with sex more than a conversation of its clerically set purpose. Patricia Curtin in her article "Textual analysis in mass communication studies: theory and methodology" (1995) discussed Stuart Hall's theory that film does not 'reflect' or 'decode' menstruation as a reality; it 'encodes' through specific filmic techniques. In Hollywood films as well as sex education films concept of menstruation has been used to construct ways of thinking about the growth process of becoming woman. Bellafante argues that: "Most films have typically followed a narrative arc..." (Bellafante, 2005, p.1). Specific representations have displayed menstrual cycle in films but there is still lack of realization on it.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter aims to elaborate how this research will be carried out and which method will be used. Sampling procedure, method and research questions will be explained in this chapter.

3.1 Feminist Media Studies

I am going to draw out a method from the work of scholars in the field of feminist media studies. Van Zoonen (1994) shows that in traditional science:

The themes, theories and methodologies which have been shown to be male-biased in the sense that women's problems have been ignored in many research agendas and that the particular experience of men has often been presented as having universal validity, overlooking the particular experiences of women.

The aim of this thesis is also to analyze the representation of menstruation among patriarchal society's values and benefits, which are in films of Hollywood cinema. Feminist perspective will be used to draw out ways of selecting, approaching, evaluating, critiquing films. Therefore, adopting a feminist perspective while, analyzing the media will be used as feminist media studies' scholars suggested.

Van Zoonen clarifies an issue that concern women as: it is often said that women are underrepresented in media content when compared to their population that consists 50 percent of the population ... Alternatively, in media content there is misrepresentation of some women issues.

The same path goes for representation of menstruation and minimizing it and marginalizing it as a women issue. Viewers of the films are often blind to the issues that are related to women menstrual cycle.

Wales (1999) states textual analysis and feminist film analysis examine texts in the same way, however, the latter looks at texts from feminist point of view. (p.15) Smelik (1998) states semiotic framework is usually applied to the analysis of sexual difference in text and, also woman subjectivity. The study accordingly, uses feminist film analysis in order to decode the different ways of women menstrual cycle's representation. Gever explains:

“Feminists have waged a two-pronged attack on the repressive and oppressive mechanisms at work within realist films (both documentary and fiction), undertaking detailed, sometimes exhilarating theoretical analyses of popular film culture as well as radically reworking cinematic conventions in iconoclastic, rigorous avant-garde films.” (1991, p.170)

Chris Barker (2008) states “Feminism is centrally concerned with sex as an organizing principle of social life where gender relations are thoroughly saturated with power.” (p. 24) Aim of this study is in the same vein: to uncover the saturated gender with power of fiction films of Hollywood cinema.

Power relations are manifested the body, the refusal of menstruation and not accepting it to be ‘contained’ in society as a routine aspect of life; these can be considered as oppression of women.

The ideas of media as storytellers – ‘history’ makers – even ‘his’ story makers² shows how women voice is marginalized. Part of my argument is to underline the way that the mediated/filmic texts ‘make history’ – but ‘unnatural history’ around the issue of menstruation.

Foucault’s notion of the body clarifies the relationship between body and its cultural context. Lois McNay in her book *Foucault & Feminism* insists on “what Foucault model suggest is that it is impossible to know the materiality of the body outside of its cultural significations.” (1992, p.30) Therefore, a male dominated culture could affect our understanding of female body with patriarchal points of view.

3.2 Textual Analysis

We derive meaning from the text and it is not all inside texts, “...if meaning wholly existed in the text, then the task of analysis would be only to unpack this message. Assuming a text had an unambiguous meaning, then *all* analysis of that text would be the same” (Lacey, 2009, p.20). Film analysis notices meanings of images. Actually, meanings are given to texts. “The object of textual analysis is to understand how the meaning of the text is created.... In the context, or discourse, of Media Studies, text means any artifact that contains information communicated via a medium” (p.12).

In current study the films are going to be studied as texts. Films in place of texts are sets of relation that takes place in a signifying arrangement and meaning. They are mediated texts that give meaning to representation of women’s body. In films signifying system works to create particular meaning by establishing representation.

² Male dominated written history which is written by men.

There are contexts in the films' texts which are crucial to be identified for discovering texts' meanings in broader social and historical background. Wales cited from Laurie Shrage that contextual criticism ought to "aim to describe features of the context of reception of a piece of art ... the context of reception might indulge audience's habits." (1999) Therefore, textual analysis as a qualitative method is conducted. It is a way to study different kinds of texts. The study uses textual analysis to find out types of menstrual cycle's representation in Hollywood film industry. Curtin (1995, p.12) states, "Textual analysis methodology follows that the text is the means to the study in textual analysis, not the end, of interest is not the text itself but what the text signifies." Textual analysis of a movie as text needs questioning and examining aspects which help to create meaning through acting, cinematography, directing and lightening; also, noticing the separate aspects which make films' meanings. Textual analysis includes understanding of the ways films fit into bigger background of its cultural, historical, political and social situation. "The analyst must both deconstruct and reconstruct the text, ultimately placing the meaning of production into the larger social and historical context" (Curtin, 1995, p.27).

According to McKee (2003) in film analysis, text is used to 'decode' meanings. As McKee puts, in textual analysis the investigator's necessity is to have skill to interpret the overall contextual frame and consider features like motifs that run through film text. Therefore, this method makes it possible for information to appear regarding menstruation that is represented in special ways. According to McKee (2003) films are main texts to apply textual analysis for uncovering filmic representations and their themes. Textual analysis is used for analyzing the films in this research to find the

themes which are presented among stories; as Jankowski and Jensen (1991) point out to interpret texts and examine them we can use textual analysis for decoding.

Thematic analysis is one of frequently used methods of qualitative analysis. In thematic analysis researcher identifies limited number of themes that effectively reveal their textual data. Thematic analysis is applied to current work for uncovering themes and motifs.

Textual analysis is used for this study to uncovering gender and power's representation in the Hollywood's films.

3.3 Sampling

The current study explores representation of menstrual cycle in Hollywood films. In fact, in the study the Hollywood movies with constructed meanings about female bodies are the main texts.

Movies with constructed representations of menstruation and its characteristics in Hollywood movies are chosen. For finding samples films with representation of menstruation, produced during Hollywood film industry history was obtained from "Jezebel" the website that is a subset of Gawker Media an American online media company and blog network. Then in second step, the full list made up of 25 films excluded to films with representing the issue for first leading role female. Table 1 shows all the films with representing menstrual cycle for first leading role female during the years 1976-2010.

Table 3.1 Films with representation of menstruation for first leading character female between the Years 1976-2010

Name	Year	Director	Leading Woman Actor	Genre
Carrie	1976	Brian De Palma	Sissy Spacek	Horror
The Blue Lagoon	1980	Randal Kleiser	Brooke Shields	Drama
Immediate Family	1989	Jonathan Kaplan	Glenn Close	Drama
My Girl	1991	Howard Zieff	Anna Chlumsky	Drama
Showgirls	1995	Paul Verhoeven	Elizabeth Berkley	Drama
Slums of Beverly Hills	1998	Tamara Jenkins	Natasha Lyonne	Comedy
Dirty Love	2005	John Mallory Asher	Jenny McCarthy	Comedy
She's the Man	2006	Andy Fickman	Amanda Bynes	Comedy
Towelhead	2007	Alan Ball	Summer Bishil	Comedy
The Runaways	2010	Floria Sigismondi	Dakota Fanning	Drama

Source: <http://jezebel.com/>

After having watched all the films three of them are chosen according to their genres; I distinguished them into three major genres: comedy, drama and horror. In each category the first produced film is chosen because of potential influence that they could have on next films in their genre.

The selected includes: *Carrie* a horror film by Brian De Palma (1976), *The Blue Lagoon* a drama film by Randal Kleiser (1980) and *Slums of Beverly Hills* a comedy film by Tamara Jenkins (1998). All selected films include menstruation issue in American society.

The study's theoretical framework uses feminist media studies for analyzing the movies. "Film theory has been an enabling device for a research program of interpretation and criticism."(Knight, 1993, p.324) The three movies have been watched and significant elements of stories like characters, first leading role woman, themes in the plot and general forms of gender and power have been recorded.

Likewise, cinematic devices and notable techniques are used for finding meanings throughout the analysis of movies. At last, the comparative review on the movies provides major discussion of this study.

3.4 Research Questions

The key factor of the study based on the crucial research questions. In order to obtain the goal of this research, the following research questions are mentioned:

Research Question 1.How menstruation is represented in mainstream Hollywood films?

Research Question 2.Which dimension of menstruation represented in selected films regarding menstrual cycle?

In final step comparative review of the movies generalizes representation of menstruation in the texts.

The mixing of data types, known as data triangulation, is used to help in validating the raised claims by choosing three texts as data. Furthermore, inter-rater reliability is applied for the work to strengthen reliability of findings by having one more person's accompany.

Chapter 4

GOING WITH THE FLOW? HOLLYWOOD'S RESISTANCE TO THE RITUAL OF MENSTRUATION

The main objective of this chapter is to analyze the ways in which the selected Hollywood films have helped to construct and reproduce mainstream ways of thinking about menstruation. My analysis draws on both gender studies and feminist media studies to focus on the way that power relations and the distribution of gender power is scripted and presented. In this chapter selected films are examined from perspective of gender studies which emphasis on socialization of people in the society and films as social story-telling tool. The research investigates several cinematic devices, women in leading role and stories.

This thesis is concerned about the way women have been represented in films and the way those representations often stand for one theme, they get marginalized. This research tries to concentrate on filmic representations of menstruation which help to shape the way we think about women and menstruation. The study tries to look at menstruation in a new way; and questions the way that Hollywood films represent menstruation. This particular analysis shows another way of looking at it in movies where a girl is going through menstruation. Major themes that will be discussed are power struggle, making it an embarrassing issue and it is a way of silencing women. Because of that, the study wants to challenge the dominant paradigm that situates women and women's body as something marginal, silenced and quiet. Where the

woman is either bodily on display like a sex object and even in that case she is still hidden in terms of her bodily cycle's running.

In order to accomplish this task, 23 films have been identified between years 1976 to 2010. From these 23 films, three of them will be specifically chosen for in depth reading; while drawing preferably on sequences from the other films to support the argument that I intend to make.

At a connotative level the filmic texts play with women's feelings about stigmatization and marginalization. They always depict in a sequence of events as something to be ashamed of, nervous and worried about.

Menstruation problem is considered like a tool of controlling women. This analysis will uncover stories about menstruation as dangerous, as dirt, evil and problem by exploring cinematic devices, narrative and leading female characters and their power relations with male characters.

This study tries to argue that the texts draw on patriarchal assumptions that exist in the world in which actors, directors, producers live. According to Stuart Hall, those assumptions are coded into the films encoded (Zoonen, 1994, p.8). Additionally this study tries to argue that until those codes which also exist in the minds of the audience are challenged people are more likely to decode the films according to the dominant paradigm. This chapter offers another way of decoding films, I want to show that this is symbolic violence; includes power relations, all the sequences between fathers and daughters, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters are always about power, it is always about who gets the speech, and I want to claim that the one who invariably gets the

speech is the male and the one who is silenced even when they speak, even when they shout actually they are being silenced. In fact, this study shows how to read it; it clarifies even when they do speak, even if the leading female characters did try to prove themselves, it would be a petty victory. It was not a victory in changing the structure of the society. It was not a victory that can continue tomorrow, it was just that moment; it was like the director or the writer who is offering an unwise victory for women. The analysis suggests a way of looking at movies that may offer “momentary of successful woman”. However, ultimately the filmic text pours them back into dominant paradigm at the end of the film. The films have to make the patriarchal structure well again.

The films subvert the power that women have as they move from adolescence to womanhood. The films are making it seem like a problem, something that should be seen as a problem; as, it is the society that has the problem with women. In patriarchal society, it could be an issue of what are they going to do with all these women unless they are subservient, unless they are following your orders, unless they are in the house washing the dishes and cooking the food? What are they going to do with them; especially when they are pretending to be a democratic society where women are allowed to vote; but as the society changes and as the cooperate world allows more women to work, will film structure change?

4.1 Carrie (1976)

From a dominant interpretation, the film can be read as a supernatural horror film about a teenage girl with hidden power that appears to flash up once she becomes annoyed or otherwise troubled. In brief, her power turns out to be obvious afterward her humiliation by her peers and abusive mother, finally causing in disaster.

The main character, 'Carrie' (performed by Sissy Spacek) is a teenager girl who is abused by her unbalanced Christian fundamentalist mother, Margaret. Being abused by her mother is part of the surface level plot. The girls at Carrie's High School similarly harass Carrie. She is marginalized in both the private and public spheres. It is like, there is no place for Carrie in the world, and this is like there is no place for a woman. So in that film there is no place for women in the world, moving from teenager to womanhood is a problem for society; it is like patriarchal concern and conflict in facing another woman.

Carrie experiences her first period while showering in the school's sports hall showers after sport class. She appears to get super natural power which is brought to her by her menstruation. After having her first period at a late age, as her school's principle said: "Hard to believe in this day and age a girl in high school will know something, facts." she begins developing telekinetic power. As she has no place to go in the world; she is constantly avoided by her peers at school and when she goes home she becomes the subject of abuse from her religious mother. She is a shy, lonely, and quite girl who cannot defend herself over being abused by her mother and classmates. For Carrie who has been harassed, the power that is given to her by her first period plays a role in which she could defend herself. In this case menstruation is represented as a source of power for women. Carrie's being unaware of existence of menstruation, humiliations of it by her classmates and punishment by her mother for menstruation, make Carrie to involve violence out of revenge for her offenders by her 'power'.

It is symbolically important that her surname is White, because this is a factor which gives us a clue, Carrie has positive dimension. Carrie's characteristics represent a weak

girl who has had little attention and support in her life. However, some scenes display her facing encouragement, for instance, after Carrie had her first period, Miss Collins Carrie's gym teacher brings Carrie to the school principal's office while consoling her, the principal says to Carrie: "Would you like to go to infirmary? Lie down for a while". Here Menstruation is supposed to be a sickness according to his point of view. In response Carrie refuses by shaking her head and Miss Collins with confidence tries to encourage Carrie to be strong and says: "I think Carrie can go home". This interprets that she must become invisible due to her period from the public which is the school in this case. When the principal says: "Would you like a ride? We could call you a cab". This kind of treating menstruation makes the one who has it a vulnerable person who should be marginal from the others. Again Carrie refuses in the same way and Miss Collins supports her answer by saying: "I'm sure she can walk home. And Carrie you are dismissed from gym for a week, just take your studies home instead, okay?" Yet, in the very next scene, the principle calls Carrie "Cassie" several times – a film device that suggests how disregards she is or how she only comes to the attention of "power" when she has her first period. The scene is as an attempt to represent menstruation as an illness and weakness. The different ways that men and women treat menstruation is also represented. The principal represents patriarchy in charge of society that treats menstruation as women's weakness that should be treated like an illness. While the gym teacher represents educated women in the same society who tries to gives realistic and logical point of view to the issue. The scene also encourages certain readings. It shows Carrie several times by low angle camera to increase her power. And the male character is portrayed by close up shot to Focus on his fearful expression of Carrie ('s power). These features pose menstruating girl in power position who can be a threat and

potential danger for patriarchy power; in here the man principal who has the highest post in the institution is the representation of patriarchal power whose power is challenged by an adolescence girls' menstruation.



Figure 1: Carrie and Miss Collins in the Principal's office

A main problem for Carrie is that she does not have self-confidence and has been marginalized; during the film Carrie talks less than other characters and whenever she talks her voice is hardly hearable. Her hair often cover her face and in scenes in which she express herself her hair is pull out or behind her ears. Even her costume and makeup in the film is always pale. Her positioning in scenes, in which other students are, like in locker room, volleyball ground and class room scenes, is in the very corner of and far from camera angel. She is left by only super natural powers to deal with her social status. So, because of her marginalization and shyness others make her frustrated and

angry; therefore, she uses her supernatural power that is her only ability to keep her rights and having control over her excitements. It shows women cannot control injustices over themselves unless by a power that is not yet accepted in the society. Whenever Carrie could not control the oppressive situations over her, she used her power to stop oppressions. She used it against her gym teacher, schools' principal, and mother; and at the end against all the ones who she interacted in the film. The Director of Carrie, De Palma in an interview with *Cinefantastique Magazine* states that "telekinesis is used as an extension of Carrie's emotions. Carrie's feeling that were completely translated into actions that only erupted when she got terribly excited, terribly anxious and terribly sad". So, several release of Carrie's power during the film portrays frequency of eruption in a coming of age girl in patriarchal society. But, the director only explained the surface of the power's meaning; while himself represent menstruation as the pre essence for a teenage girl to become a monster in the film. The film portray the one who experience her first menstrual cycle as an evil; while there are other girls and women characters who portrayed as normal people.

A crucial issue in this movie is the power of Carrie as a girl; especially, because this power has been given to her after her first menstruation. She has an ability to move or to cause changes in objects by force of the mind. These all can show dangerousness of a girl for the accepted structures of patriarchal society. A girl with development of her body in same time can have development in her mind that can cause changes in society by force of the way of thinking of her mind. And, the sign of girls' body's development is considered menstruation. So, menstruation as a sign of women body's development is considered to be dangerous and cause changes.

Religion as a part of patriarchal societies has negative point of view about menstruation. One major scene in the film is when Carrie says that she has been invited to the prom by a boy to her mother, who is extremely religious woman and she keeps refusing Carrie. Carrie's mother says "after the blood (Carrie's menstruation), comes the boy". It is a dinner table scene in which Carrie and her mother sit opposite of each other as their discussion about going to prom is opposite of each other. Carrie's insistence on going to the prom and her mother's refusal to allow her to go, provide another example of the emotional power that Carrie has as she directs it against her mother. Following this scene, she explains her special power to her mother the only person in the film that she shares her secret with. The script provides Carrie with an opportunity to explain how her power works: "If I concentrate I can move things". She continues "I'm not the only one, other people can do it, and I have read about it". Her mother asks Carrie not to use her power and to give it up. Her mother believes that this is Satan's power. Indeed, Carrie's mother as a symbol of oppressive religious beliefs encourages Carrie to submit to those beliefs and to reject the power that arises from within her. It should be highlighted that Carrie's mother as denotation of religious rules represents religious unfairness about women's power. The analysis highlights another remarkable subtext; it represents another story about women's subjugation. Carrie's father left her mother; so, due to absent man in their home they have got financial problem and their house is on sale. Carrie's mom for covering their financial circumstances goes home to home for promoting Christianity and collect money. It demonstrates that Carrie's mom in some extents is dependent on religion for making profit out of it for herself and her daughter's life. While, the home which is shown that Margaret (Carrie's mom) goes to introduce a religious book is a big house with a housewife who drinks and watches television. The

lady is mother of one of Carrie's friends. She is not interested in Margaret's religious talking and interrupts her talking and prefers just pay her so that she leave their home. Later we are shown that the lady with his husband and two daughters eat their dinner together. This is the only time that Sue's (Carrie's friend) father is shown during the film. The point here is, Carrie's friend's family are rich and are not religious because of presence of a man. Even his very short presence (seconds) in the film illustrates difference between having a man at house and not having it in a patriarchal society. The dichotomy is displayed by a contrast between two families' clothes, houses, lifestyles and jobs. For instance, one of the binary is Carrie's old small house which is for sale due to financial difficulties and the house of her friend's family which is a big, high-middle class one.



Figure 2: Carrie and her mother at the scene of dinner table

Some particular cinematic devices are applied in *Carrie* with horror genre. The very first shot in the film, which taken in volleyball playground in the school, shows Carrie in the corner of the playground next to two girls sitting out of the playground. These are considered as a symbol of her reserved character. In addition, this established shot could deliver some information regarding Carrie who is leading character of the movie. Red color is repeatedly used throughout the film; it reminds the color of blood, particularly menstruation which is base of Carrie's supernatural power. In volleyball ground shot, her classmate, Norma with red hat and shorts is situated in front of Carrie. They lose the game because Carrie could not hit the ball, after that Norma beats her head with the red hat. These can be considered as symbolization of Carrie's menstruation is approaching her and it will be an impact for her. The impact for Carrie is the super natural power that is brought to her by her first period. In terms of gender analysis it means the ones who get their first menstruation will get power too.



Figure 3: The scene of Volleyball ground

In the scene of locker room in the school, Norma who is presented with a red hat throughout the film is the one next to Carrie's shower; Norma as the person engaged with the red color in the film is situated next to Carrie, to emphasize that her menstruation is about to happen. Norma has a sort of power in the film. She is in charge of students' attendance sheets and she is the prom's king and queen ballot collector. From this suggestion, In terms of Norma's privileges and her customs with reappearing red color, she is a metaphor regarding menstruation. Apparently, menstruation is considered as women's power over men in social interactions.

Carrie's mother, Margaret as a symbol of religion is very aggressive with women's menstruation. She believes menstruation comes through girl when they do their first sin. Also in Christianity menstruation is beginning of fertility and sexual contact. From this

point of view sex should be experienced just for baby and not for pleasure. At the beginning of the movie, Carrie is shown while she is getting her first period. Aviva Briefel (2005) explains the way that is interpreted as Carrie's sin and cause of her menstruation. She clarifies initially, the shower is a secure and self-pleasure place for Carrie and it keeps her away from her concerns. The shots are fetishizing the body's pleasure, then its blood flowing. Our attention to Carrie's naked body is suddenly interrupted by the flow of blood from between Carrie's legs that she had just been stroking. The scene is likely to be outpouring of a wound rather than healthy puberty. Brian De Palma's movie suggests that she has caused the wound by her sinful touching which implies masturbation. The close-ups on her legs and hands as, she engages in and finally bleeds points toward the possibility of Carrie's 'self-abuse'. Experience of menstruation in shower leads to Carrie's aggressive behaviors, Carrie obtains telekinetic power by first menstruation; her anger explodes the bathroom light. In the end of the film Carrie covered in pig's blood rather than menstrual blood will use these powers to burn down her prom.



Figure 4: The first shot of menstruation

Heather Corinna in her article *I, Being Born Woman and Suppressed* cites “Much of our culture has constructed itself to be purposefully incompatible with women” (2011, p.216). Religious as a part of culture treat women in same vein. The movie has a religious context that can be read denotatively from the surface or preferred meaning of the text. In this religious sense, menstruation is seen as a ‘curse’ – arguably a central motif of the film. As Merskin argues in Daly (1999), “the ‘curse’ is a taboo that presents menstruating women as filthy, sick, unbalanced, and ritually impure” (p. 944). Merskin continues:

Nearly every religious and cultural tradition stigmatizes menstruating women. For Western societies, the popular reference to menstruation as “the curse” began with the biblical telling of it being inflicted on Eve because of her sin (p. 944).

When Carrie's mother talks about religious matters including the religious context of menstruation, her voice gets loud. This suggests a connotative meaning of her emphasize on religious aspects. This "theme" plays out across the whole text as domination of religion in the film and particularly about menstruation. Their home is all decorated by religious signs, statues and pictures to emphasize on how religious is dominated at their home. Those signs can remind us the important role of religious beliefs and its domination in the home. Religion was the real reason that Margaret did not explain menstruation to her daughter so it caused Carrie's later fear of blood. The form of Christianity that we are presented with by the film is the form that situates women as guilty of a crime (eating the apple provided by the snake) and that menstruation is a sign of that crime. So we are seeing the power of religion, the power of the state (school), the power of patriarchy, all pressing down on Carrie.

In the scene of choosing lipstick for her prom, Carrie prefers the light pink rather than red. She does not like the red color because on the one hand her shy and reserve character prevents her from choosing a color that makes her the center of attention and on the other hand, red now signifies menstruation blood.

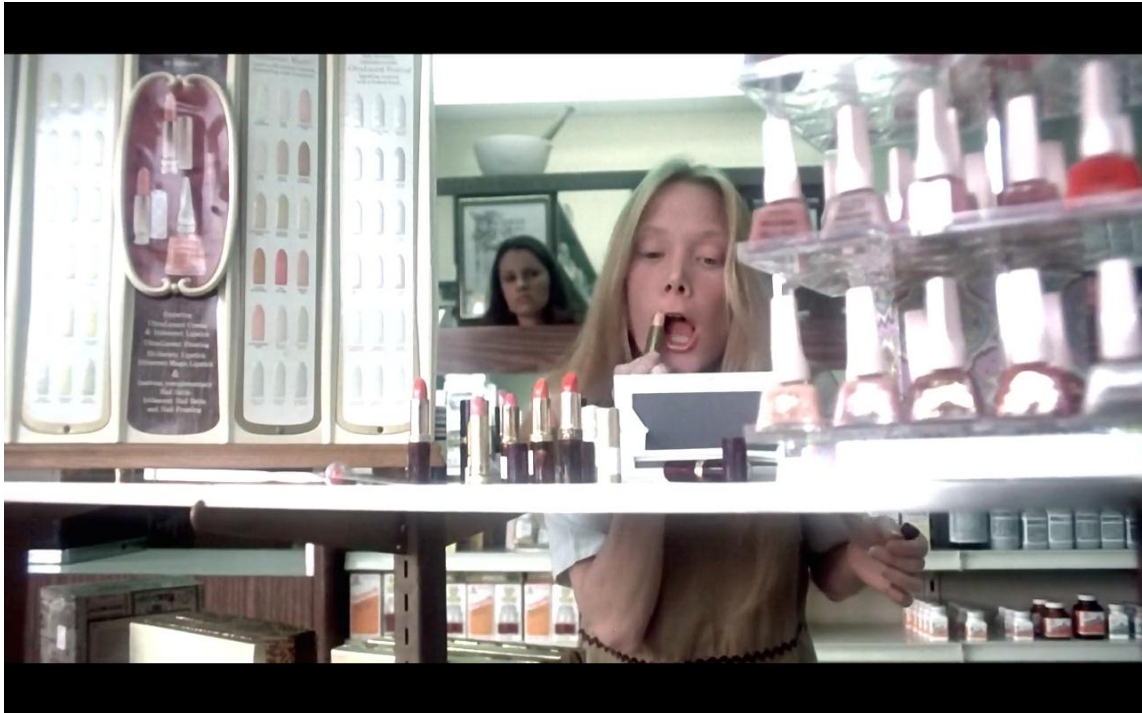


Figure 5: Carrie in the scene of testing lipsticks for the prom

Northrup (1998) emphasizes on the Western philosophy of civilization that is based on mythology of patriarchy, the authority of men. A native American journalist Jamake Highwater, who stated that “all human beliefs and activities spring from an underlying mythology,” which means, from Northrup’s perspective, “that if our culture is totally ‘ruled by the father,’ our view of our female bodies and even our medical system also follow male-oriented rules” (p. 3). Representation of menstruation in *Carrie* is also from point of view of men and follows disbeliefs that are created in patriarchal societies. Here in ‘Carrie’ menstruation is portrayed as a base of powers that can be dangerous for society. The myth is normalized by religious beliefs as a male dominated apparatus in society that is under authority of men to having control over women bodies flow. “Menstruation is a reality in most women’s lives for about forty years. It is an issue that

touches one-half the world's population intimately and directly" (Bobel and Kissling, 2011, p.122). While, in 'Carrie' Carrie's extremely religious mother defines it as a curse that comes to girls who commit their first sin. Her reason comes from her religious information. This highlights the ideological role of patriarchy in social reality and thus the way that patriarchic rational plays out in Hollywood films.

Since menstruation is a kind of transition in teenage girls' life in addition it is indeed maturity and turning to the new stage of the life, in films it used to represent transition from being girl to becoming a woman for the one who get her first period. In other words, Hollywood's point of view regarding female menstruation in that way is about becoming women, and not being women! These point toward the possibility that, menstruation in those films is a metaphor to show upcoming changes and transitions.

In fact, menstruation is presented as an "initiation"; passing from childhood to adulthood or powerless to powerful. In the movie after showing the evolution in the girl character, another type of "passing point" has been realized in the story of the movie. Whereas, having first menstruation for leading character, was a transition point for the character and also for the movie. In the film it was noted after the characters' first menstruating – there occur an evolution in the entire sense of the movie and of the characters' herself by getting super natural power. In the other words, looking at the great change in the movie, we notice a discourse of change that refuses "human agency". Women are victims of these kinds of display which misrepresent their embodiments.

"The demonstration of the dangerous, problematic female body is evident perhaps most eminently at the time of menarche, the first menstrual period" (Bobel, 2010, p. 31).

Chris Bobel's argument supports my own analysis of 'Carrie'. In this film we can see release of power that happened to the one who had her first period and how that transformation was the base of her upcoming committing in killing her teachers, peers and mother. As if, being dangerous was consequence of that character's first menstruation.

One of American Native elder called Lake described the power of menstrual cycles and her cultural practices bring peace to her people:

The natural forces affect our life giving force. . . . [Menstruation] is a profound time of change, anxiety, stress, and unknown power. . . . Anything this powerful requires a ritual or ceremony so that the power can be experienced, understood, and applied in an effective way. We [Native Americans] call this ceremony the Moontime Ceremony because it was and still is affected by the full moon power. . . . We use the ancient power in a positive way to help keep the cycle healthy, spiritual, and in balance (Cohen, 2001, p. 29).

There is no ritual or ceremony for Carrie to understand her power which is brought to her by her menstruation; so, she could not use her power in an effective way as Cohen stated; finally, her power used to eliminate people surrounding her.

Considering the above quote, because Carrie's menstruation had not been controlled her menstruation's power was in a negative way and not balanced. The point here is surely that there was no ritual, there was no explanation, there was no embrace or understanding – there was no celebration of the power. There was only dirt, pig's blood, go home, hide, and be ashamed. These aspects in the film denote consequence of not celebrating and welcoming for power.

Choi & McKeown argue that women have been socialized to dislike their menstrual cycle (1997); religion as a part of socialization process offers embracement for menstruation. Carrie reminded the confirmed pessimism of religious point of view regarding women's menstruation. Hollywood film industry as a tool of patriarchal society have marginalized the issue; Hollywood does not provide a ritualistic space for understanding and celebrating the special power of women and appreciate the very human experience of body and individual's representation. It seems marginalization of menstrual cycle and its illustration has misrepresented women's life which is as an effect of patriarchal power in the society (implementing power over women). For example, in the classroom scene English teacher Mr. Fromm reads a poem to the class. Fromm asks the students to comment on Tommy Ross' poem, Carrie calls it beautiful and Mr. Fromm makes fun of her. Here in the film where patriarchal power is visible by representing a male teacher who is in charge of the class; the character Carrie is framed, blamed as a consequence of power. It is power of privileged to construct images of women and women's bodies. According to Briefel "Carrie... graphically shows her female leads' menstruation as a precursor or even a prerequisite to her committing acts of violence" (2005, 21). This denotes menstruation's hidden powers; in addition, its possible dangers for societies, according to patriarchic rules.

In the film oppressive religious customs that is reproducing women's marginalization. Carrie White's passionately religious mother was the representative of offensive attitudes of religion over women and women body. After Margaret found out the ability of her daughter says Exodus 22:18 from the Bible 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live' that means she must kill her daughter to help her to be pure from being guilty. It shows

how offensive religious logics are in order to silencing and controlling women. Analysis of the gender issue here can be considered as Margaret could be faced by patriarchal power and the consequences. Because Carrie's mother was also once a pubescent female with a first menstruation! She might have been victimized by gender power relations. Carrie is passive marginal that conform oppressive acts. Her passive acts ease progress of offensive circumstances.

Another considerable topic here is men's empowerment and their effects on women's life. The first male character introduced in the film is the school's principal. Miss Collins takes Carrie to his office and explains to him that in the school's locker room Carrie has experienced her first period and has been humiliated by her classmates because she did not know why she was bleeding. The school's principle in response says in this day and age a girl in high school must know something regarding menstruation. Miss Collins continues by saying that Carrie did not know anything about the menstruation because her mother did not tell her about it. The school's principal says this is because of fear and beliefs of people. Although he stated all this about the period and people beliefs, he got embarrassed when he saw Carrie's menstrual blood on Miss Collins sport short. When she notices his embarrassment, she says: "It's just her period for God's sake". Here, we are shown an educated man and an educated woman talking about menstruation while he has discussed gesture and in contrast she talks about it as an absolutely normal fact.

Both Carrie's classmates Sue and Chris want to take next step toward Carrie for what they have done to her at the time of her first experience of menstruation. They both ask for help and company from their boyfriends. In one hand, Sue feels guilty because she

had teased Carrie regarding her fear of the first period in the locker room. She asks Tommy to invite Carrie to the school's prom. Because, she feels she owes Carrie. On the other hand, Chris asks her boyfriend, Billy Nolan, to help her get revenge on Carrie and Miss Collins because she had been punished for teasing Carrie. Both Sue and Chris rely on their boyfriends for reaching their aim. However, one of them for helping and another for disturbing.

“Attention to representations of the menstrual cycle reveals how women internalize destructive messages about womanhood” (Bobel & Kissling, 2011, p.123). In the film *Carrie* menstruation appears as a passive, uncontrollable act that reflects an equally passive identity. For Carrie menstruation is defined as a thing of being humiliated and teased. The power which is brought to her by her first period is representative of how destructive can menstruation and its power can be.

At the end of the movie, when Carrie's telekinetic powers have destroyed her prom, her mother, and herself, she returns and demands attention. The very last scene of the film displays Sue's nightmare after prom. She dreams that she is walking towards Carrie's destructed house, and the sign of "For Sale" that appears like a graveyard cross, which also contains "Carrie White burns in hell." When Sue sits to put flowers on Carrie's grave, Carrie's bloody hand comes out and grabs her hand. These last shots, emphasis on destructive power of menstruation for women and society.

According to Philcher and Whelehan (2005, p.97), the ways women are represented illustrate how they were treated in their daily lives. Problematizing depiction of menstruation will primarily suggest it as a problem which could be judged by its

problematic attributes. These problematic views of menstruation has led to many issues to the extend they ignore menstruation as a natural fact. The issue is men get to tell the story and give the meaning. These process change men's mentality about menstrual cycle, and later affected the ways women view themselves. Patriarchal powers get to try and shape the way we think or feel about this issue.

Kowalski and Chapple (2000) stated, "Historically, menstruating women were viewed much like witches, possessing remarkable powers and abilities to perform acts such as turning wine sour and making razor blades blunt" (p. 75). In 'Carrie' representation goes further and shows Carrie possess a remarkable ability that can cause people die.

According to Merskin, "In American life, Puritanical notions of impurity, shame, and fear have been used to physiologically control the activities of girls and women. Menstruation has been socially constructed as a problem _ something shameful and dirty" (1999, p.955). As her mother warns Carrie about her impurity by having her period and asks her to pray for forgiveness.

In this theme menstruation is shown as a problematic aspect of life which affects other aspects of daily routines or causes some other troubles. As Chris Bobel in his book 'New Blood' gives a concept of menstruation as: "Leaky, liquid, flowing menstruation _ a uniquely female experience associated with sexuality _ is constructed as a shameful form of pollution that must be contained. Menstruation, then, is constituted as a problem in need of a solution" (2010, p. 31). Carrie's mother said to Carrie that if she had not committed in sin she would have not gotten her menstruation. Then, as solution she forced Carrie to pray for forgiveness. The movie refers to women monthly blood

discharge as something disgusting, something by which Carrie needs help from other people and God.

Bobel argued “This dangerous female body demanded an acute fixation on the embodied presentation, a preoccupation that became and remains the stuff of American girlhood” (2010, p. 33). The major problematic theme that has been used for representation of menstruation in *Carrie* is control over woman’s body as a trouble.

At the end of the film her fear of blood makes her classmate Chris chose pouring Pig’s blood on Carrie at the prom in revenge. Pouring Pigs blood is chosen to highlighting nastiness and dirtiness of menstruation. Carrie uses her power to destroy schools’ principal, teachers and students in the prom in taking revenge and she killed her mother with it later too. All of these portraits tell that women power can be dangerous for society if it is not controlled. At the end, Carrie’s death clarifies that there is no opportunity and chance for a woman to live with power in the society.

The reaping (2007) has a similar theme to *Carrie*. Both are horror film with coming of age girls who experience their first menstrual period by which gaining super natural power. In one film written in the 70s, the girl dies at the end of the film but in the other in 2007 the girl survives by an educated woman. In the 1970s the corporate worlds of society is still having a lot of problems with what are we going to do with all these women who are looking for equal rights? Who wants to break the glass ceiling, who wants equal pay, who wants to be treated as first class citizens? What are we going to do with women like that? Jennifer Ball in her review of Lara Freidenfelds’ book *The Modern Period: Menstruation in Twentieth-Century America* points out “The idea of

menstruation taking on a modern character in the twentieth century makes sense. After all, this was era in which U.S. culture took on its modern characteristics.” So, Carrie at a subtext reading is almost like saying that women have got nowhere to move from ‘girlhood’ to ‘womanhood’ in her life. The point is that Carrie is becoming a woman in this way of thinking there is nowhere for her. She has to die at the end. 20-25 years later the same thing represented, some people want to kill the girl who has power. But, an educated, scientific woman helps her and rescues her from the male dominated society. In the 2000s, after three decades the film suggests there are some positive changes happened; maybe not where she came from but maybe where she is going to. So we have the world of tradition which is dangerous and dark, superstitious and then we have the scientist women who represents enlightenment, progress so in becoming a woman she can move to, there is a new world but for Carrie there was no new world. These clarify time is changed and also consciousness of producers and directors increased.

4.2 The Blue Lagoon (1980)

From a dominant reading, the film is a romance and adventure film directed by Randal Kleiser (1980) about the story of two children abandoned on an island in the South Pacific. As it comes in following parts, without any support and also the restrictions of society, passionate feelings and physical changes happen as they reach puberty. In the Victorian era, two preadolescence cousins, Emmeline, Richard and their chief of ship, Paddy Button survive a shipwreck in the Pacific Ocean and reach an attractive island. Paddy tries to take care of the children, he discovered some blood which was a sign of human sacrifices, so he puts children a rule in which going to the other side of the island

is banned. He warns them that a bogeyman exist in the other side. Emmeline catches a specific berry that Paddy also forbids the children from eating it.

Paddy dies sooner than expected after he drank too much. The alone children go to another part of the island and build up their own home. They survive on the natural resources of the island.

After years, they grow and become teenagers. They live in their cottage, spending days together playing, swimming, fishing and preparing foods. Emmeline and Richards fall in love; although this is full of stress for them due to their unawareness of human sexuality, therefore they could not clearly express their physical attraction for each other.

Emmeline as the leading role woman and the only representation of women in the film is portrayed marginalized, passive, weak, ineffective and emotional. Her menstruation is portrayed as one of the reasons and examples of her marginalization and silencing by men.

There are scenes in which Emmeline's menstruation is represented as her weakness by her expressions and Richard's reactions on the issue as a male character who represents a patriarchy point of view. Since they do not know anything about human sexuality they should not know about gender roles as well. So, the film displays their reactions as instinctive responses to the issue of menstruation.

Emmeline (acted by Brooke Shields) is scared after she starts her first menstrual period; she is scared when Richard (acted by Christopher Atkins) wants to check her for a cut that he assumes is the cause of her bleeding. In the scene that Emmeline goes into a

lagoon to wash herself, she notices that the water is bloody, she get shocked when she realizes that it is her blood, therefore she gets frightened and yells for Richard's help. Richard runs toward her, he sees Emmeline bleeding in the water and he asks "what's wrong?" In this scene the camera angle of view and Richard's position is looking down on the subject who is desperate Emmeline. In one hand Emmeline as a woman is posed powerless, on the other hand, Richard as a man is posed as the one who has power. In the next shot Richard says "you're bleeding." and tries to go toward her. While Emmeline had asked for help, with a worried gesture replies "I'm alright." the next shot shows Richard saying "But, you're bleeding." and trying to help her. Then she says "Go away." at this moment she closes her eyes as she shied and continues "don't look at me." "Go away, go away." The next shot shows Richard confused about the reaction of Emmeline since she asked for help and now she is refusing him for helping her. Afterward, in the next shot Emmeline says "go away" and then throw stick at Richard and again asks "go away." Richard still confused and leaves there. The last shot in this scene shows her with a lot of tension and worries.



Figure 6: Emmeline's reaction while Richard seen her period

In the next shot Richard for finding an explanation asks Emmeline "What was it then? Why were you bleeding like that?" when she says "I don't know." Richard calls her "Liar." but she insists and says "It's true, I don't know." Richard is curious about what the fact is and says "People don't bleed like that unless they cut themselves. Maybe you're hurt real bad and you just don't know it, let me look." Emmeline gets panic and replies "No, I don't want you to look." He asks "But why?" and she simply says "Just because." Richard angrily stands up and replies "That is not fair, I don't keep any secret from you, I tell you everything, everything." Then, next shot displays Emmeline frustrated and upset, because she had no explanation about the transition that was happening to her, neither for herself nor for Richard due to their lack of knowledge.



Figure 7: Richard in a supervising posture while talking about Emmeline's period

Emmeline curiously goes to the other side of the island and finds out a stony Moai-like idol there which is bleeding. As soon as she realizes that this is a holy place, she starts praying. She tells Richard that she thinks the bogeyman is actually God and Paddy was wrong. However, Richard blames her for refusing to obey the law.

Emmeline is portrayed as a person whose religious belief is strong. In the scene that she gets her first period and also the scene that she sees the stony idol, she instinctively and without any knowledge or information concludes the things that she thinks that are right things, intuitively. Although she always swims naked with Richard, at the time she gets her period she feels inconvenience when Richard looks at her. Here the film portrays shame around menstruation as an instinct and natural expression of women.

In establishing shot of the film, in which for first time we met Emmeline and Richard two leading role characters are on the deck of ship. Richard is situated on the very front

of the deck and Emmeline is situated behind him. This opening scene with positioning a boy in front of and higher than a girl can remind us male domination and patriarchal power in the storyline.



Figure 8: Emmeline in a male dominated society; men are in front of and upper than her

Among the stuff left for them from the ship, there are some story-telling photos that play the role of media for them in the island. For example, in one of the scene the kids have changed their clothes and try to play the roles of a man and woman in the one of story photos. Women generally live with some norms and traditions about the stereotypical images of their gender in male dominated world. In other words, they certainly live in a patriarchal culture and apply the norms of the society in which they live. As Van Zoonen (1994) cites media is seen as the main form representing “stereotypical, patriarchal and

hegemonic values about women and femininity.” In other word, women’s bodies’ representations are according to patriarchal societies roles. Likewise, there is preceding work around the marginalization of women “The mass media have been found to play a critical role in maintaining the gender-power imbalance, "passing on dominant, patriarchal/sexist values" (Gill, 2003). Emmeline is displayed always just looking at the pictures and getting ideas for her own way of living. While, Richard is the one who in some scenes mentions the stories of the pictures and read them. It points out to male domination in the media.

“Defining gender as discourse leads to the question of what ‘role’ the media play in gender discourse and how that role is realized” (Zoonen, 1994, p. 41). The characters of the film, by looking to the pictures and reading their subtitles, which tell stories, put themselves into the stories. As it mentioned above, even Richard and Emmeline try to imitate pictures characters by wearing clothes that look like their costumes. Those mediated texts played as a pattern for them to learn how to treat each other as well. Thus as Van Zoonen points out “media can be seen as (social) technologies of gender, accommodating, modifying, reconstructing and producing disciplining and contradictory cultural outlooks of sexual difference” (1994, p. 41).

Besides, the director, Kleiser uses the photos in order to show Richard, Emmeline and Paddy’s feelings in the island. For instance, a picture in which a woman and man seated next to and upset from each other, is shown at the end of the scene that, Emmeline and Richard discuss on her period which leads to getting upset from each other, to resemble their anger.



Figure 9: The picture that has been shown after the scenes regarding Emmeline's menstruation

Contextual atmosphere of the film brings back to Eve and Adam's story. The island, itself can be resembled as the garden (Eden) and the berry bushes as forbidden fruit of the tree. As at the end of the film when they eat berries, their father who is seeking them finally finds them and takes them back to home. Eventually, Richard and Emmeline like Adam and Eve were taken out of their heaven.

There are patriarchal tendencies within the texts, the role of males and females; the positioning of women and women's body are all related aspects. Throughout the film, Emmeline has the only female role. All of the people around her either in ships or the island are men. Even her new-born child is male. In fact, Emmeline is surrounded by a male dominated society.

All of the decisions in ships and the island are made by male characters. Paddy is the one who has the role of taking care and upbringing of the children. He teaches the things he knows like building a yacht or hut, fishing and tying ropes to Richard and not Emmeline. In the scenes that Paddy learns his abilities to Richard, she is marginalized sitting next to them or alone while doing her own stuff. Later, Richard's abilities that he learned from Paddy leads to his leadership and her relies on him.

Paddy sets a law that no one must go to the other side of the island because he had seen that the native islanders scarify human for their stony idol. However, Emmeline as the only female character is portrayed as the one who disobey the law which is conducted by men. In the other hand, Richard obeys the rule and blames Emmeline for disobeying the law.

After Paddy's death Emmeline is displayed relying on Richard and asks him to take her off the island. It is displayed that after Paddy the other man takes his place and is responsible and in charge of having control of their lives; as he is the one who rides the boat and chooses the next place to live.

Emmeline as a woman is portrayed as the one who washes the clothes, cuts Richard's hair off and prepares food. However, Richard is portrayed as a man who goes fishing, prepares food materials and in charge of keeping her secured.

Stereotypically Richard in male character is portrayed rational and logical, he is physically and intellectually shown powerful but on the other hand Emmeline acts emotional. Richard tries to find out answers for his questions, but she tells him "you can't know everything, only God knows everything." This shows male character in

scientific position while the female character is positioned spiritual. These are some stereotypical reasons that support men's domination in society and encourage them to be active. But, women are supposed to be passive in society due to, their emotional way of thinking and making decisions.

Richard forces Emmeline to confess he is the smartest person, fastest swimmer and runner and best hut builder on their island. She exhausts and hurts as Richard lay her down and sit on her to force her for confessing, says "You're the best at everything." to get rid of him. In the island in which apparently there are no one else except Richard and Emmeline, it denotes confession of women to accept that men are the superior gender. Connotation meaning out of this sequence of events related to power and gender and empower male character and represent female character powerless and under control of male domination.

Another portrayal that shows woman as emotional and man as intellectual is the scene in which, they see the first ship from the moment that they have been trapped across the island. Richard runs to light their signifier but arrives late, however, Emmeline who is closer to the signifier does not light it. That is, because she thinks they are never getting off the island and believe that is where they live. Moreover, that is their home, forever. Richard angrily blames her for letting the ship go by. Furthermore, to prove that she acts awkward from his point of view criticizes her by reminding the time that she got her period: "First you cry for help then you throw sticks at me." Then again, she says that the island now and forever is our home, Richard responses that he could never live there forever with just her. Then, he mentions "You never used to have secrets you wouldn't tell me!" as one of his reasons. The dynamics of this sequence also marginalize women

due to their menstruation as their body's unstableness and their 'illogical' acts and feelings. "Acceptable menstrual discourse is limited to complaints about cramps, jokes about mood swings, and, increasingly, the appeal of continuous oral contraception to suppress menstruation" (Bobel, 2010, p. 7). Menstruation is used by patriarchy to suppress and silence women for controlling their power.

"The ideology of American culture suggests that evidence of femininity, that fact that women bleeding are best kept hidden. Girls are responsible for hiding this shame as well as the accouterments of this activity" (Merskin, 1999, p.955). As it is in the film, Emmeline an American girl, instinctively feels shameful for her bleeding and keeps it like a secret from Richard and do not discuss about it with him. Knowledge is a form of power; it is possible that she keeps her developing knowledge about her body to herself. As mentioned several times during the film Richard blames her for keeping a secret from him which is her menstruation. But, she never shares her experience and idea about menstruation with Richard.

The shame around menstruation's blood is part of what kept women suppressed in general. Emmeline's shame around her body bleeding prevents her to talk about the issue with Richard. The thing that leads to, being blamed by a man. There are similarities between discourses which used for representing menstruation in the movie and its representation in menstrual products advertisements.

Previous studies have found that feminine hygiene ads in Seventeen presented menstruation as something to be feared as well as a hygienic crisis that encouraged guilt, diminished self-esteem, and focused on the importance of peer support over that of adults (Merskin, 1999, p. 942).

Guilt and diminished self-esteem are the most important parallels between ads and the film regarding reproducing menstruation. Furthermore, it applies to all the movies studied in this thesis.

In the patriarchal system men are considered normal and Richard as a man decreases the level of Emmeline as a woman, as something abnormal based on her monthly bleeding. The script provides her with an opportunity to decrease the level of Richard by accusing him for her masturbation instead of his judgment for her menstruation: “Well you're not so perfect, either, Mr. Richard Lestrangle.” After their discussion, Richard evicts Emmeline from the house justifying that he has built it. However, she points out that she has helped him. Yet, Richard insists that he built most of it. The analysis emphasizes that in fact the female character is dependent on a male character. Furthermore, she faces some difficulties to take care of herself, particularly to inhabit and provide food. Eventually, Richard as a male character helps her and again she relies on him. Indeed, women are displayed dependent on men, even if they try to be independent.

The film may serve thinking about controlling women by men. Because of, women's breaking law and acting emotional. Emmeline the only female character in the film breaks the law that is ruled by Paddy. By doing so she put them in a position of danger of being killed by native islanders. Mistakenly, she thinks the idol is God. Furthermore, they lose the opportunity of being rescued from the island by a ship due to her sense of belonging to the island. These point toward, woman is nature not culture, and women are based on emotion not reason. From this point of view men are portrayed intellectual while women are emotional.

The very last scene in the film shows Richard's father along with the sailors on their ship found Emmeline, Richard and their son in their boat. The shot shows a big ship next to a little boat in ocean. The boat and the ship can be interpreted as symbolization of the island and the bigger world which they were transferring to. The ship that is full of sailor men with Richard's father in charge of it represents a larger male dominated society that Emmeline who is attached to Richard and her son is going to.

Reproduction of gender through filmic techniques represents Emmeline's character as a female vulnerable and submissive and, representation of her menstruation is an underscore of the theme. The only female character is the one who experiences isolation because of being marginal by male characters; and male characters voice are always over her. This is violence regarding women; this is power relations, all the sequences between Emmeline and Richard is always about power, it is always about who gets the speech, and the one who invariably gets the speech is the male character and the one who is silenced even when she speaks, even when she shouts actually she is being silenced by male domination.

4.3 Slums of Beverly Hills (1998)

From a dominant reading, the film represents a teenage girl's sexual developing that joins a source of obsession, anxiety and class conflict. Indeed the movie portrays a girl's story that is marginalized by patriarchal society's rules. The adolescence girl lives with her nomadic family including her divorced father, addicted teenage brother (David Krumholtz) and an irritable little brother (Eli Marienthal). Then, there is Marisa Tomei as Rita the cousin who runs away from drug rehab. When the sexy cousin lives with

family, Vivian gets elder feminine character, although she is truthfully looser one and somewhat unbalanced.

This film tries to connect women's body, father, absent woman and no manual for becoming woman all together. Even though, in a dominant reading it is about a family. One scene between Vivian and Rita are dancing happy with 'We Got the Bump' song in which they throw Rita's vibrator to each other, eventually Vivian's dad walked in their room. Tamara Jenkins director of the film in an interview explains the meaning of the scene and points out:

There was no privacy. Female coming of sexual age is very public, particularly if you have breasts and there is something the world can scrutinize. The world starts treating you differently while you're straddling girlhood and adulthood. You don't have the manual for dealing with it, yet you're walking around with all this hardware (1998).

In this thesis that is about the ways that menstruation has been hidden as a topic of discourse it is very important to concentrate on a female character who suffers from lack of guidance in understanding her menstruation which is a side of her body. The fact that she is developing body is the most important thing for this particular work. A teenage girl who lives in a male dominated family while, her parents are divorced and she does not have a female pattern to learn from. Therefore, she is not familiar with femininity. She does not know enough about menstruation as she does not know about function of woman's breasts, existence of female mustache and vibrator device. She does not have a manual for dealing with menstruation neither for the other feminine aspects. Vivian

neither is familiar with female body features nor knows enough how to have control over her own body. Because of that, she has been humiliated by patriarchal points of view that represented by her father and two brothers. They laughed to Vivian's period as female problems, embarrassed her for her big breasts and called her hermaphrodite because of her mustache. These all show whenever she involved with a new feminine thing she got humiliated and questioned by her father and brothers.



Figure 10: Vivian's brothers laughing to her menstruation as 'female problems'

Although, Vivian's father is in charge of taking care of her the film shows women are responsible to learn about womanhood to a teenage girls. Gradually, she gets familiar

with the ways of controlling her body's development by female characters in the film. She learns how to use bra from a woman who is a female underwear seller, learns how to use depilatory from her cousin Rita, and learns the way of using menstrual pad and menstrual belt from Doris, her father's girlfriend. These all mean for a coming of age girl who tries to learn and be familiar about female body especially in case of menstruation women are the main manual and guidance. On one hand, the director is right about lack of manual for menstruation and the other facts about female embodiment that teenage girls going to face them; because menstruation is socially considered a shame, it is an embarrassment, and everybody has to keep quiet about it, nobody wants to say it out loud. But on the other hand, films like this become a guide. The movies are the manual, young girls learn how to kiss, learn how to love, learn what romance is, learn what it means to have a menstrual period and learn how other people will react to it, by watching movies, reading magazines, looking at TV, listen to songs, which are mediated representations.

In the film as a mediated representation menstruation is a female body quality that silence women and has to be controlled and hidden otherwise can cause problem. Mostly the film is trying to make a joke of menstruation and to makes it feel a shame; it is trying to makes it as something that is not normal. But, even when it does offer as a normal thing it is only short lived. In a dinner table scene at Vivian father's girlfriend house Vivian experiences her blood flowing and makes her chair cover bloody. Vivian does not talk about it to her father because whenever she discuss about her body development her father shares it with her brothers and they laugh at her; for example, her father asks her elder brother to express his thought about Vivian's breasts and then her brother

embarrassed her for her breasts. So, her fear of being revealed about her period by her father to her brothers and once again being laughed and humiliated by them made her not to talk about it with her father who was responsible about her. She covers the blood stain with her napkins to hide it. Her father was talking about their relationship with his girlfriend that she sees the stain and asks them to leave her house. Here menstruation is the cause of breaking up the relationship between Vivian's father and his girlfriend. Murray lost his chance for developing his relationship with Doris because of interference of his daughter's menstruation. So, it can be considered as a problem for patriarchy.



Figure 11: Vivian in her male dominated family wears loose shirt to avoid her brother's gaze

Menstruation for Vivian in the film is as like as her breasts and mustache to be center of making joke in front of others. So she decides to keep it in silence in order to prevent any embarrassment or humiliation. She hides her menstruation blood like her breasts. To hide her breasts she wears loose t-shirt at home to prevent her breasts from her brother's gaze. As it is mentioned she learned by her experience that she does not have power to battle with her father and brothers so the only way to feel convenience and secure is hiding her body's developments. Here is an example that shows Vivian's father accuses her and asks his elder son to express his thoughts for approving him and Vivian does not have power to challenge the patriarchy that is represented by her father and brothers. When she wore an outfit without bra her father told "You're hanging out of it." And says: "It's not right." Then asks his son: "Look at her. Does that look whorey to you?" by this her father put her brother in power position and gives the right to accuse Vivian. Vivian's brother answers "Well, the problem is, Dad, that Viv is stacked.", "She's already got cleavage, Dad." Vivian tries to convince her brother that is supposed to look like that. When she sees she cannot stop his brother blames him for the way he treats her but her father by his son's answers makes sure that Vivian must wear bra. In this scene clearly is shown that making decisions and judgments in the family belongs to men. Actually, power is distributed between men.



Figure 12: The scene in which, Vivian's father and brother judge her outfit

There is a scene in which there are other clues that Vivian is marginalized. It is a breakfast scene in which her brothers and boyfriend are and she came in and found out her elder brother bought drugs from her boyfriend. She started to complain that her elder brother interfere by saying "Will you put something on? We're all eating here. You're making us sick." She wore her loose t-shirt with socks while her brothers themselves wore nothing except shorts and still her brother has the power to ask her to cover her legs as a part of her body while he is naked. Her body and its developments are always used in the film by her father and brothers for accusing her.

This study highlights that Vivian is suffering by her male dominated family. She is surrounded by her father and two brothers and she is the only female in her family. She

tolerates her father's interference on her personal things. She does not feel secure with her older brother's gaze and is inconvenience of being laughed by her brothers for her menstruation. Vivian complains her brothers in front of her father for their behavior toward her but her father does not support her and sometimes he laughs at her as well. For example, when Vivian experiences her period her brothers laugh at her and the father is trying to control his laugh. It shows they can humiliate her and make joke about her while she does not have any power to stop them or prevent their humiliation over herself. The film represents women's marginalization and stigmatization. In fact, she is marginalized by her male relatives because of her gender. In addition, she imitates her father's behaviors. For instance, she bites her nails as her father does. While, her father bites his nails but he accuses her for doing so, just because she is a girl and with those nails no one going to marry her. Indeed, in this case Vivian and her father are representing same act but she is discriminated for her gender.

When Vivian during a conversation with her brother tells: "I'm improving." He replies with humor "Your tits, maybe." She tries to defend herself and says "I don't go around talking about your morning boner...so don't talk about my tits." And their conversation finishes by his answer that "I'm proud of my manhood." The film works at denotative level to give a superficial feeling of success for the girl, as if it does only superficial but almost it does not. Although Vivian tried to win over her brother, at last victory was given to her brother by his last words to portray his power. The boy is not ashamed of his body, but the girl is ashamed of herself. Nonetheless, she was not born ashamed. She learned and experienced to be ashamed of her body's improvements by the ways that her family treated her.

“The ideology of American culture suggests that evidence of femininity, that fact that women bleed, is best kept hidden. Girls are responsible for hiding this shame as well as the accouterments of this activity”(Merskin, 1999, p.955). In the dinner table scene Vivian as the girl who gets her menstrual cycle tries to hide evidence of her menstruation which is a spot of blood on her chair, from the ones who are surrounded her around the table. Indeed, the film portraits menstruation as an aspect of coming of age, in addition to characterizes it as an aspect of life by which, responsibilities and limitations of becoming a woman and controlling its menstrual cycle are inescapable.



Figure 13: Vivian trying to clean her menstrual blood from her chair

The analysis of the film mentions another important point; gender is not something independently meaningful but, is socially constructed. Besides, inside the bigger context the film has got something to do with being more like men. Vivian's role model is her father besides she is in a male dominated family and is minority. Living with three men has effects on Vivian's character. She got more masculine postures, gestures and manners rather than feminine. Her way of walking, posing, standing, talking and dancing are more like masculine traits than feminine. Even she decides to do reduction surgery on her breasts. She could think this way that, I will cut my breasts so I will be more like a man. As a result, there will be no more embarrassment about them for her. Although, she fails in doing so because of her fear of doctors explanation about reducing her breasts and remembering her mother while looking at her breasts in mirror. In fact, she makes decision to live with the way she is instead of put herself on violence of the surgery. Then, Vivian who was trying to stand in front of her family and change them regarding the ways they treat her accept the things in the ways they are. She could not change the ways of thinking of her family so she decides to conform to them and accept them in the way that they really are.



Figure 14: Vivian in a masculine posture while talking to her father

The structure of absence mother that leads to lack of information about menstruation in the film is represented in *My Girl* (1991) as well. Interestingly, both *Slums of Beverly Hills* and *My Girl* are produced in the 90s but both of them depict stories in the 70s. It could be on those times that mother absence at home could cause lack of knowledge regarding menstruation. In addition, in both films main characters are coming of age girls who are learning about their gender and body by socialization. The film *My Girl* is set in 1972. Vada Sultenfuss (Anna Chlumsky) is coming of age depress girl. She as like as Vivian is surrounded by males, her father and his friend and colleague, her teacher and her best friend who are male characters. So like Vivian she has got more masculine traits. Unlike Vivian's family there is a woman who lives with Vada and his father, she

is Vada's grandmother but she has got Alzheimer disease so her existence does not help Vada to learn about femininity. Her father Harry Sultenfuss (Dan Aykroyd) is widower that does not comprehend her and pays no attention to her. As it is for Vivian in *Slums of Beverly Hills*, in a scene that Vivian complains to her dad about not considering her says "How come nobody ever tells me anything?" her father ignores her question that related to her existence and asks "What's that on your face?" (He points to her depilatory.) Vivian and Vada both are marginalized by patriarchy, specifically their fathers.

Vada's summer adventures introduce her to the world of adolescence. And, her menstruation is part of it. She makes friend with Shelley DeVoto (Jamie Lee Curtis) new makeup artist who works for her father's funeral parlor and gives Vada guidance. Shelley plays the role that in *Slums of Beverly Hills* female characters did for Vivian, learning about femininity and female embodiment. Vada cannot find her father to tell him that she is bleeding; then Shelly is the one who explains her the menstrual cycle.

Unlike Vivian that has not got any one who could support her and bring her rights Vada got Shelley who is now her father's fiancé on her back. Shelley and Harry get into an argument, and Shelley tells Harry life is not about death only, and he does not have to pay no attention to living particularly his daughter. Though, Vada's sorrow about loss of her friend fixes the gap between her and her father. Finally Vada hits her pain, moreover comes to terms with her previous concerns. For instance, Vada was harassed by girls since her best friend Thomas J. Sennett (Macaulay Culkin) is unpopular boy. But at the end of the film Vada with feminine costume and hair style is portrayed with her best friend who is a girl. While, Vada starts her summer with his best friend who was a boy

she ends it with her girl best friend. At the end Vada in *My Girl* and Vivian in *Slums of Beverly Hills* both socialized to act in the ways that patriarchal society wants them to do.

Towelhead (2007) is another film which depicts menstruation and marginalization of a teenage girl by her father. Set in 1990, *Towelhead* depicts teenage Lebanese American girl, Jasira's story (Summer Bishil). At first Jasira lives with her mother in New York but, when her mother's boyfriend helps her to shave pubic hair, her mother sends Jasira to live with her dictatorial Lebanese father Rifat (Peter MacDissi) in suburb in Texas. There, she experiences an orgasm by an adult magazine she found while babysitting a neighbor's boy.

Jasira is isolated from her father, he is authoritarian and does not allow her to use tampons, and furthermore he would like to spend his time with his girlfriend rather than with his daughter. As like as Vivian's father in *Slums of Beverly Hills*, Jasira's father wants to have control over her and her body and uses violence whenever according to his beliefs Jasira breaks his rules. For instance, in a breakfast table scene when Jasira comes and sits, her father slams her because he thinks her clothes were inappropriate. Both Jasira's and Vivian's privacy breaks by their fathers. Jasira had an interview with one of their neighbors and her father asks to listen to it. When Jasira says: "It's private." Her father explicitly replies "Nothing you have is private." He even searches toilet bins to find out things related to his daughter; in a scene that her father finds out her used tampon in toilet bin he locked her out of home. Her father's restrict her to not using tampon and forces her to use large menstrual pads instead. Jasira's boy classmates found out her large pads and laugh at and humiliate her in front of her all classmates. She had controversial feelings about the way of controlling her bodily flow; in one hand, at home

she has been forced to use large pads for her menstruation, on the other hand, the rule that her father set for her menstruation was humiliated by her peers.

All the three characters Jasira, Vada and Vivian experience menstruation as a sign of their body's development and adolescence. For all of them the manual to dealing with menstruation were women characters. It displays menstruation like a secret between women who are experts in dealing with it and they are the ones that have the knowledge of controlling the flow.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

As conclusion, the analysis of selected filmic texts shows that in what way menstruation is represented by Hollywood film industry and how the characteristics of patriarchal society uses it to marginalize women. The cultural, religious and social limits demonstrated the boundaries of patriarchal society in the movies. Moreover, fundamental opinions decreased females as subordinate and marginalized them and having menstruation is one of the reasons. The side effects of culture of male dominated society's representations of menstruation are shame, horror and elimination. Shame induced fear of being revealed to men is part the representation of experiencing menstruation in the films. The powers of patriarchy and subsequent opinions and practices in relation to the shame, secrecy and taboos of menstruation have formed a cultural context for women's duties and roles concerning the menstrual cycle.

As there is no sympathy regarding menstruation in the films by male characters, it shows the possible fear of patriarchal powers about menstruation which can bring privilege for female. All the movies represent different possible ways in which menstruation can be harmful and shameful.

Director Diana Fabianova in her 2010 documentary 'Red Moon' says:

“At any given time, 25% of the female population is menstruating; invisible, discreet. Why is this normal, biological function taboo? There must be some

deeper meaning. „So much blood, such little attention.” Giovanna Chesler explains Fabianova’s expressions that “... her statement effectively simplifies the trouble with menstruation in global patriarchal culture ...” (2011).

To portrait a subject that is widely spread across the entire human being history, which is a basic requirement of continuity of human kind, there is undeniable necessity to balance its representation. There is lot of scarcity on this subject in American films and there approach toward menstruation is unstable.

The three female characters Carrie, Emmeline and Vivian all have less power and influence than the male characters that are related to them. The girls’ menstruation is one of the major things in the films which brings inconvenience and dissatisfaction in their relationship with their peer boys.

Cohen (2001) declared that the majority of native women worldwide believe the menstruating woman needs to be both sanctified and separated from people according to their tribal custom during the menstrual flow. The thesis would be particularly significant by taking a cross cultural viewpoint, since taboos regarding menstruation are almost in every cultures in the world.

My exploration about most of Hollywood movies shows women monthly bleeding as, something that has to do with women having relationships with men, which leads to marginalizations.

The 23 scenes from Hollywood filmic texts represent menstrual periods from different perspectives – some view it as something unexpected, others see it as shameful and still

others as something that has to be kept secret. Some represent it as the boundary between being a girl and becoming a woman. But, there are other kinds of representations that represent menstruation as problematic and troublesome. Indeed, few films see menstruation as something normal. Hollywood films tend to mystify the reality about women's feelings during menstruation. The filmic texts present menstrual bleeding as abnormal occurrences in the life cycle of women and even leave an impression that menstruation is an accident – that should not even take place.

The movies do not 'basically say' but they have been supporting and reproducing unrealistic aspects of the issue. They represent denotative/connotative meanings for the issue. I look at the 'complexity' of the filmic techniques that hide the issue of menstruation while simultaneously using it to produce representations that help to shape the way women and men feel about women and women's bodies. I have identified major representational themes in films about menstruation: menstruation as horror, menstruation as problem, menstruation as inconvenience, menstruation as trouble, and the shame associated with menstruation and menstruation as joke.

Hollywood movies represent the menstrual cycles as problematic while other aspects of womanhood including pregnancy (something that prevents menstruation for the duration) are treated less harshly – indeed, often celebrated – in Hollywood movies.

In Hollywood films, menstruation is often scripted as a "hidden misery", sometime hidden from the rest of society. This re-enforces the idea of menstruation as taboo. Women generally submit to this taboo in their relations with men and world – leading to

the need for secrecy, silence and often a feeling of shame. Cinema could be one way of challenging these narrow and marginalizing ways of seeing women's bodies, but the films under review do not live up to this possibility. In the films analyzed in this study, by various genres they have represented the ways teenagers feel uncomfortable with their menstruation and try to find a way to not being discovered while menstruating.

In films on one hand girls are told that menstruation is a natural and normal part of your body and it is related to your health also, on the other hand they are cautioned to be careful for preventing of possible clue of being period. Some women who are faced menstruation's social difficulties instead of seeing it as something natural to their body system, view it as negative development which limits them.

Although, menstruation is often represented as a dirty, disgusting, annoying and funny aspect of girls life, it is sometimes represented and welcomed in some of the films like 'The Legend of Billie Jean', 'My Girl', 'A Walk on the moon' and 'Tumbleweeds', due to women body system development and their capacities (while all those welcoming had their own problematic consequences). In one hand menstruation blood is considered 'dirty' or "disgusting", on the other hand it is "funny" issue for boys to laugh at girls as others. Welcoming menstruation limited to congratulating for becoming a woman while afterward girls who experienced it must face limitation of becoming a woman in their society. Perhaps each "welcome" has its "problematic consequences" as well.

Interestingly, menopause is shown only in the movie 'Slums of Beverly Hills' in an indirect way. It seems that representation of menstrual cycle, even as a funny or

disgusting aspect of women's life is more representable for film industry compare to the situation that women lose their capacity for fertility. It is undeniable that welcoming girls in order to become a woman and have a capacity for sexual relations and fertility is more in the area of interest of Hollywood than situations of losing the capacities. Hollywood is more interested in making films about menstruation than menopause.

Hollywood movies have represented women onset of puberty as a problematic, dirty, disgusting, and annoying aspect of girls life rather than ritualistic, intrusive and unavoidable part of routine daily life; besides the narrative structure of these films falls into different genres like comedy, drama, romance, etc. The problem is related to the way that all of the films present a very narrow way of understanding of menstruation; there are no competing stories of menstruation where it represents positive strength, power or success.

Selected films show various ways of representation in which, teenagers feel uncomfortable with their menstruation and seek a way to not being discovered while bleeding. In one hand, menstruation is a natural and normal part of the body and is related to the health, however, on the other hand girls are cautioned to be careful for preventing of possible clue of being period. "...it must seem paradoxical to be told that menstruation is normal and natural and something to be happy about while being instructed both to conceal its occurrence and to carry on as if nothing were happening" (Koff and Rierdan, 1995). Films as manuals could be more realistic and positive regarding displaying menstruation in order to, breaking the taboo around it and affect

mainstream audience beliefs for having natural and normal understanding it which is a undeniable part of human beings contiuity.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Representations of Menstruation in the 23 Films

	Name	Year	Genre	Dirt	Fear	Humor	Punishment	Secret	Shame
1	Carrie	1976	Horror	✓	✓	✓	✓		
2	The Blue Lagoon	1980	Drama		✓		✓	✓	✓
3	Slum of Beverly Hills	1998	Comedy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	Sixteen Candles	1984	Comedy			✓			
5	The legend of Billie Jean	1985	Drama			✓			
6	Pretty in Pink	1986	Comedy			✓			
7	Immediate Family	1989	Drama						✓
8	My Girl	1991	Drama		✓				
9	Showgirls	1995	Drama	✓	✓				✓
10	Female Perversions	1996	Drama	✓				✓	
11	Eve's Bayou	1997	Drama			✓		✓	✓
12	A Walk on the Moon	1999	Drama		✓		✓	✓	✓
13	Boys Don't Cry	1999	Drama		✓			✓	✓

14	Tumbleweeds	1999	Drama			✓			
15	The Virgin Suicides	1999	Drama						✓
16	Happy Campers	2001	Comedy		✓				
17	Saved!	2004	Comedy			✓			
18	Dirty Love	2005	Comedy	✓		✓		✓	✓
19	She's the Man	2006	Comedy	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
20	The Reaping	2007	Horror		✓		✓		
21	Superbad	2007	Comedy	✓		✓			✓
22	Towelhead	2007	Comedy		✓	✓	✓		✓
23	The Runaways	2010	Drama					✓	

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Carrie, Brian De Palma, 1976

The Blue Lagoon, Randal Kleiser, 1980

Sixteen Candles, John Hughes, 1984

The Legend of Billie Jean, Matthew Robbins, 1985

Pretty in Pink, Howard Deutch, 1986

Immediate Family, Jonathan Kaplan, 1989

My Girl, Howard Zieff, 1991

Showgirls, Paul Verhoeven, 1995

Female Perversions, Susan Streitfeld, 1996

Eve's Bayou, Kasi Lemmons, 1997

Slums of Beverly Hills, Tamara Jenkins, 1998

A Walk on the Moon, Tony Goldwyn, 1999

Boys Don't Cry, Kimberly Peirce, 1999

Tumbleweeds, Gavin O'Connor, 1999

The Virgin Suicides, Sophia Coppola, 1999

Happy Campers, Daniel Waters, 2001

Saved!, Brian Dannelly, 2004

Dirty Love, John Mallory Asher, 2005

She's the Man, Andy Fickman, 2006

The Reaping, Stephen Hopkins, 2007

Superbad, Greg Mottola, 2007

Towelhead, Alan Ball, 2007

The Runaways, Floria Sigismondi, 2010