



KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY  
SOCIAL SCIENCE INSTITUTION  
CINEMA AND TELEVISION

*Sonsuz Uzay*

**Invisible Woman in the Man's World**

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MASTER DEGREE THESIS

ISTANBUL, AUGUST, 2017

# ***Sonsuz Uzay- Invisible Woman in the Man's World***

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## ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

This work entitled **SONSUZ UNZAY- INVISIBLE WOMAN IN THE MAN'S WORLD** prepared by **SAHAR ELETREBY** has been judged to be successful at the defense exam held on **/09/2017** and accepted by our jury as **MASTER DEGREE THESIS AND PROJECT**.

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## DISCLAIMER

I, Sahar Eletreby;

Hereby declare that this Master's Project Thesis is my own original work and that due references have been appropriately provided on all supporting literature and resources.

Sahar Eletreby

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Sahar Eletreby

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## **Abstract**

In this thesis, I began to review feminist film theorists writing about how women has been represented in cinema and reflect on reality of women rights, discussing how cinema represented the reality of women in the previous century and now, how far cinema was right in this representation and how socially is it as similar, with giving examples from Hollywood films as a western example and Egyptian films as an example from Middle East cinema. Also discussing the female language in films from the 60's patriarchal era and now, also talking about women's alternative cinema that has begun to represent women from late 90's till now with the third wave of feminism and after.

Key Words: Egypt, Feminism, Middle East, Representation of women, Hollywood, Patriarchy.



## INTRODUCTION

Trying to make your way in a career as a female in the Middle East is a lot harder than anywhere else in the world. There aren't the legal protections against some acts that typically exists in Europe and USA. With being against women's education then put obstacles on her work conditions and make excuses for these obstacles -socially more than governmentally- has raised women's voices towards their wasted rights in the Middle East.

According to the Population Reference "Bureau", more women attend university than men in two-thirds of Middle Eastern countries. Access to education and overall literacy has increased significantly over the past decade. This is something that has been and should be celebrated. However, this progress in education equality has not translated into participation in the labor force. In the Middle East, only 20 per cent of women participate in the workforce. This is the lowest level of female workers of any region in the world (Fahimi, Moghadam 2003).

If a woman consciously makes the choice to stay at home, raise a family, and tend to the household, she should be supported in the decision. But the problem occurs when the decision is not so conscious. According to *The Guardian*, laws in 100 countries around

the world restrict the type of job a woman can do. In 18 of those countries, men can stop their wives from accepting a job offer (Ford, Anderson 2015).

Around 70 per cent of the 1.5 billion people in the world living in poverty are women. In both developing and developed countries, women earn 60 to 75 per cent of a man's income on average around the world.

And this is just the beginning. Feminist movements have been working for decades to assure that women can have their fair share in all aspects as men, but somehow while it raised and made a great success in the western societies –where it has begun- here, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we can say, it terribly failed in the Middle East (Mayor 1995) . This paper is not just about the Middle East, which is, by far, is in a better shape more than central and west Asia or few countries in Eastern Europe.

While a country like Afghanistan prevent girls from education, another country like Saudi Arabia prevents women from driving cars, wearing what they would like to wear, or being a part of political events. While girls are kidnapped for marriage -without their will- in a country like Kyrgyzstan, domestic violence is a known fact in Egypt, Turkey and many other eastern countries.

## **FEMINISM, THE WORLD AND EGYPT**

Feminism as known, is a movement tried for decades to establish and achieve one goal, which is “women rights of equality” politically, socially and economically. In order to achieve this goal, women have tried to create educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to such opportunities for men.

Feminist movement has begun in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It focused on the equality for both genders in marriage, parenting, and own a property rights. Then with the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century women has succeeded to win these rights (Walters 2005). It was never enough as women had to fight for what it’s theirs so there was a need for a second wave of feminist to claim for other women rights. With the apparition of liberation movements in the early of 1960s -especially in the USA- second-wave feminism broadened the debate to a wide range of issues: sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights, de facto inequalities, and official legal inequalities (Walters 2005). Second-wave feminism also drew attention to domestic violence and marital rape issues, establishment of rape crisis and battered women's shelters, and changes in custody and divorce law. Feminist movement expanded for other aspects, asking for free women from the patriarchal oppression as well.

For me, the second-wave Feminism put the seeds of women issues on the ground. Women had suffer -and still suffers- from social oppression in many countries around the world. Although the second wave has begun in the USA and spread through Europe and other countries, there were also a very active movement from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Middle East, talking about exactly what the second wave was asking for, but it has a totally different way and it fought for survival for years. Feminism movement in the Middle East has begun in Egypt with a “male leader”, the women rights writer Qasim Amin, who wrote “Liberation of Women” on 1899 (Amin, 2000), followed with Huda Sha'arawi , who founded and leded “The Egyptian Feminist Union” at 1923 (Tauris 2012).

So Feminism had begun to spread all over the world at the same time, but somehow it succeeded in western countries and failed its goals in most of the eastern countries, especially in the Middle East. I believe that the main error is the society that encourage male dominance and decrease women value. Main sentences are told to both male and female inside the family, graded from “the brother is the back bone” to “you are nothing without a husband”, these are the most popular sentences that a female in the Middle East heard every single day.

## ***SONSUZ UZAY AND FEMINIST FILM THEORY***

In her article, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Mulvey wrote “It takes as a starting point the way film reflects, reveals and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual differences which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle. It is helpful to understand what the cinema has been, how its magic worked in the past” as the mainstream cinema of 40’s, 50’s and 60’s had represented women as a second grade character in front of the male protagonist which he is the controller, the founder of the action and the first grade character.

Filmmakers were not really interested in women's issues by this time. Even with the second-wave feminism, which was sweeping the United States with freedom movements from racial racism, filmmakers were busy trying to stabilize the patriarchal system in the hope that male dominance will continue in both cinema and society. “It depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to the world”.

Reviewing Freud’s definition of castration: “This is a key psychoanalytic concept, which-like other psychoanalytic ideas- can be regarded as a metaphor\_or myth that helps us to understand how social structures and beliefs are produced. Castration is the “myth” that children use to explain the origins of sexual difference between sexes. In this respect it is similar to other fantasies that children or their carers invent to explain the origins of things, for example, the riddle of where the babies come from. Freud states:” it’s self-evident to a male child that a genital like his own is to be attributed to everyone he knows

and he cannot make its absence tally with his picture of these people' (Freud 1991). Boys hold obstinately to this conviction and will only abandon it when struggle. Substitutes for the penis, which they think is missing in women, play a determining role in many "perversions" such as fetishism. Girls do not resort to this kind of denial but, in Freud's view, "When they see that boys' genitals are different from their own, they are overcome with envy for the penis and wish to be boys themselves." (Freud, 1991).

As I'm reading Freud's Psychoanalysis theory, I cannot agree more with the word "Metaphor" of castration of women, as women has been castrated for centuries from their own presence, hiding behind a male figure in order to just live. No self- presence, no self-poses, she just live to serve the other half with no hope for a different tomorrow. The castration that women faced – and still face- was very clear in the mainstream cinema of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As instead of support women by produce films that can support the cause of "women rights", mainstream cinema has tried all the ways to undermine it with the emphasis of women physical weakness that men completes and enhance, for example, the western American Comedy *Lover, come back- 1961, Delbert Mann*, where the handsome male character Rock Hudson is playing with the naïve female character Doris Day, he has the whole film actions and the female character is just a response reaction to the whole plot, with even "childish reactions" to a successful advertisement agent. Moving to the Middle Eastern cinema, I can depict the Egyptian film *Oh, from Eve -1962, Fatin Abd Elwahab*, which was based on Shakespeare's play *The Taming of the Shrew*. It showed the female character in a nervous way like the actual story, but it looked aside of the time frame which was critical by this time in Egypt where the feminist movement

was on fire. It shows the female character as a “bad behaved” girl that needed the male character to re- discipline her, who eventually succeeded in that and the female fell in love with him and get married to him.

“The importance of the representation of the female form in a symbolic order in which in the last resort, it speaks castration and nothing else”, “The function of women in forming the patriarchal unconscious in to fold, she first symbolizes the castration threat by her real absence of penis and second thereby raises her child into the symbolic. Once this has been achieved, her meaning in the process is at an end, it doesn’t last into the world of law and language except as a memory which oscillates between memory of maternal plenitude and memory of lack. Both are posited in nature.” – (Mulvey 1975: 6), according to this claim, it was the only way to represent women in society. It is a fact that the patriarchal society by this time would never allow women to get any higher stages as, against Freud claims, most women never dreamed or wished to be men “boys”. Women through feminist movement wanted – and still- to present who she is, bodily and entitled.

In *Sonsuz Uzay* I depicted the meaning behind Mulvey’s phrase “women then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.” But with a different representation, as there is no male protagonist in the film, but the female character tried at first (through a dance) to get out of the patriarchal society and live as a hopeful female wants to live in a balanced society, but instead the patriarchal

culture is represented in the (old lady) character then the (kids in the playground) also it is represented in the location itself, with the oldness and demolition-ness as a reflect to the old traditions that still stands in our societies. It should have been erased, died and ended, but somehow this male dominance and existence is there even with the absence of the “Phallus”.

That leads us to the social terms that still stands in the Middle East, Although feminist movements has begun at the same times with Europe and USA, western countries succeeded to give most of women rights but Middle Eastern women are still struggle for their own. That’s because the Middle East still couldn’t grasp feminism principles and the fear that -by social traditions- if women has their freedom to decide for their own destiny they will turn against men and can excel alone in many ways in life.

From Feminism and Film, Molly Haskell and Marjorie Rosen’s studies are usually considered exemplars of “reflects” social reality, that depictions of women in film mirror how society treats women that these depictions are distortions of how women “really are” and what they really want.” (P.White 1998). Middle Eastern cinema – and I’m taking the Egyptian cinema as an example- fought very hard to tell women where is their place and women shouldn’t ask for more than they get, representing the happiness of a female by marriage proposal like she finally own the world- we are talking about the mainstream cinema until the 80’s- with the help of famous writers, the film turns to be a reality on land that women actually doesn’t want education or work or achieve something good for



their society, they just wanted to marry and be under the male “protagonist” of their real life.

A cinema that talks about women issue, and talking to women, through women was needed by this time to influence the society, but as the filmmaker community was a man’s world, it was a far hope by this time in the Middle East. “For cinema, in its alignment with the fantasies of the voyeur, has historically articulated its stories through a conflation of its central axis of seeing/being seen with the opposition male/female. Cinematic images of women have been so consistently oppressive and repressive that the very idea of a feminist filmmaking practice seems an impossibility. The simple gesture of directing a camera toward a woman has become equivalent to a terrorist act.” (Doane, 1981: 23). The problem in Middle East filmmaking world wasn’t going to solve until women began to produce films themselves, and it took a toll till people recognized this shift. “The identification of types and generic conventions is an important step but simply replacing stereotypes with positive images doesn't transform the system that produced them.” (P.White). The change of the stereotypes women’s characters was very few even with women producers as people with the beginning of 70’s still couldn’t understand or absorb that women need to be themselves and represented in the right way.

Still, cinema in the 70’s and 80’s had a great change in the “story” that a film represent, connecting socially with social pain and struggle. Social feminism was involved in Egyptian films, for example *No condolences for women-1979*, *Henry Barakat* .The film talks about the divorced women and their struggle to have a life and work, and how people

around the character talks about her and damage her life. *I want a solution-1975, Said Marzook*, this film also was talking about the divorce itself as a problem to a woman, and how women by this time couldn't divorce easily through courts, also the male dominance that arrived to the courthouse so judges don't give women their rights of a free will.

The importance of these films although it wasn't beautifully made or attentive to the cinematic details from image to lights and mise-en-scene was the recognition of a women right in divorce that she even couldn't have. It was a revolution that women can actually ask for divorce as it was in rare cases women did that and this "request" was always followed with shame on her from the society around.

"The dominant fiction forms the stable core around which a notion's and a period's "reality" coheres' (Silverman 1992: 41) in another words, if the society can't "imaginary" change their vision towards women, and the need of male dominancy didn't find a ways to change in the society or nation, this reality will not change and we will stay in the same circle. It's another fact that although there is a great effort in the middle east cinema to represent women's issues and highlight women rights to fulfill feminism goals, the reality is not changing, which is strange as the western societies have succeeded to change this "core of male dominance" reality but it is not working with the middle eastern. The problems are still the same, women can't achieve their goals. I couldn't find a better explanation to the women's films in the 70's more than what Chaudhri's comment about the issue: In what Silverman calls "the dominant fiction" -the image which films draw

upon and help to shape- there is an imaginary equation between the penis and the phallus, which cements the male subject's identification with power and privilege.”

Althusser confirmed that “In ideology, our relationship to reality is imbued with the imaginary: society's consensus about what is "real" is not merely a matter of "rational agreement" but of "imaginary affirmation" (Althusser 1970). So even with this imaginary signifier of “Strong Women”, and cinema language that spoke for women rights, and facts which society by this time lives in, cinema as a tool that can effect “society consensus” failed to do it. On the contrary, the problems which faces women have increased by the end of 70’s.

In 80’s Middle East cinema, filmmakers were already aware of the cinematic theories that came from the west, along with feminist theories. Filmmakers wanted to make a change by represent woman as the dominant in this period of time. They have depicted Molly Haskell’s theory about representing women in American films as an “extraordinary strong woman” who can achieve powers on land and politically too! Which wasn’t even close to reality.

The plot was “A historical event which makes a collective of men confront lack so intimately that it shatters the coherence of the male ego and reveals the abyss of lack that it conceals.” (Silverman 1992: 55) It leads to a temporary collapse of the penis/phallus equation and other elements of the dominant fiction. Although this relation with lack is primarily psychic, a male subject is more likely to represent it to himself as anatomical

deficiency- and this is how it is usually cinematically depicted. To represent such kind of women powers, the role of a woman was “criminal” for example *Tyranny of a woman- 1984*, *Nadir Galal* has represented the woman character is dreaming of wealth so she unit with a powerful drug dealer to be wealthy then she wants to be better than him so she tries to kill him with his assistant help, seducing the assistant to sleep with him if he kills her partner. Another example is *Wekalet Albalah- 1982*, *Hossam Eldin Mustafa* which talks about a local businesswoman who’s taking over the business in the whole district of *Wekalet Albalah* after ending the careers of all her competitors.

At a certain time, a change must happen. That change needed a new vision to represent women issues in a clearer way. “What I would call alternative films in women’s cinema are those which engage the current problems, the real issues, the things actually at stake in feminist communities on a local scale, and which, although informed by a global perspective, do not assume or aim at the universal, multinational audience, but address a particular one in its specific history of struggles and emergency” (De Lauretis 1990: 17). Middle Eastern and especially Iranian women filmmakers are succeeded to put these words into action with great women cinema representing astonishing films about women current issues and the lack of freedom to women in the Middle East that we fought and lost to achieve. With great films such as Marzieh Meshkini’s masterpiece *The Day I Became a Woman (2000)* which is structured in three episodes and each segment tells the story of a female at a different stage of her life. First, Hava, who is approaching her ninth birthday – traditionally the moment she must leave childhood behind and stop playing with boys. The second, Ahoo, is a young wife who is a contestant in a woman’s bicycle

race, against her family's wishes. Finally, Hooria is an old woman who goes on the ultimate shopping spree to buy all the things she has never had. Each vignette shows the disappointment and thwarted desire that women experience. The setting of Kish, an island in the Persian Gulf, with its vast stretches of sand, provides the film with its visual impact. The imagery in the second and third episodes becomes surreal. The young woman on a bicycle, one among hundreds of women clad from head to toe in black, speeding along the coastal road in an empty countryside, with her husband's family galloping after her on horseback, is unforgettable, as is the image of the old woman with her purchases all speaks for women in this part of the world and oppression they face. For the record, the film was temporary banned in Iran, which says a lot about the policy towards female representation and how they are confronted.

The shocking film *The stoning of Suraya M.* directed by Cyrus Nowrasteh (2008), which was about a real event happened in Iran represents the power of the patriarchal society and how a woman – refusing to give her husband a divorce- can be killed by her husband and neighbors, in the name of religion. The film has gone behind the stoning act and expressed women's rank inside the men society in an Iranian village, the difference of treatment to the little girls than the boys, and how women can support men's side as long as they live in such a society.

In Egypt feminist representation stayed the same till the new millennium when filmmakers decided to face women issues directly and they faced –along with production companies- a great deal of objection with a “conservative male point of view” as the

claims was accusing filmmakers to “open women’s eyes to simple problems and make it bigger and unreal”. One of the direct representations was Hani Khalifa’s film, *Sleepless Nights* (2003) talking about women’s sexual and social problems with men through the smallest details and crypts in the lives of four couples friends. But another great revolutionary films was released in the same decade, Yousry Nasrallah’s masterpiece *Scheherazade, Tell Me a Story* (2009) which is considered a pure feminist which represented by a feminist principles believer as the director is a man. The film was reviewing Egyptian women issues through a talk show host causes controversy in Cairo, leads to telling these stories of women, like working women, the importance of virginity to Egyptian women before marriage, domestic violence, and the women’s right to choose the man who will she marry, along with the political issues that can be involved in women issues. This film was considered a “shock” to the Egyptian audience with that much of freedom of speech about women rights and equality.

Somehow, some thinkers have related between oppression of women in the Middle East and Islam, as it’s the majority religion in the Middle East. Some others insists that legal systems in the Middle East codify gender inequalities in accordance with the precepts of Islam. Islamic law is threaded throughout many justice systems and constitutions in the Middle East, as these legal codes and constitutional laws often mesh a civil law of the European model with shari’a principles.

Instead of pointing to Islam as the inherent root of female discrimination, Islamic feminists identify state actors or elites as the culprits—leaders who manipulate Islam for

their own politics ends, often oppressing large segments of society, including women, in the process. Islamic feminists embrace their faith, culture and tradition while fiercely advocating for legislative reforms and interpretations that reflect a more modern understanding of the woman's role in society. They do not seek to eliminate Islam in the civil sphere; in fact, they argue that their fight for women springs from their faith.

This approach to feminism is challenged in many ways by its critics. One of the claims is that Islamic feminism and its attempts to reconcile Islam and feminism detracts from a larger feminist movement and dilutes the ability to effect change more successfully and rapidly.

However, another prominent Islamic feminist scholar, Leila Ahmed, explained that “feminists of whatever religion or religious background have always fiercely debated the key sources of women's oppression. Is it patriarchy, religion, racism, imperialism, or class oppression, or some very lethal and toxic mix of all of these? Feminists have also thus differed on the solutions, as well as exactly whom we must fight first to liberate women.” As feminists battle for the rights of a vast portion of the population, it is no wonder their strategies and reasoning are complex and sometimes at odds. Perhaps the rights of women are best dignified by appreciating women's separate beliefs and respecting their prerogative to pursue their interests and fight discrimination in a way that they feel is truly representative of their identity. Cinema should gather with the social feminist movement in every country of the Middle East to express women's needs, anxiety, and ambitions in order to find the justice that women seek

## **Conclusion**

Sonsuz Uzay is a trail aimed to mix feminist theories in a girl's dreams of freedom, which going through castration that Freud has discussed in his theory, but in an emotionally way that goes with Mulvey writings. The film goes with Freud's in every scene's closure, when the girl cross the wall, bringing the meaning of obedience yet the hope for the better in the next scene. The whole film considered as a "women's cinema" film, produced and directed by a woman, actors are mostly women, and talking about women issues and the hopes for better solutions. The film in the end argues with Freud theory, as the girl keeps on trying. The film also is consider to be a way of alternative –Middle East- cinema, as it's pointing to women issues in the Middle East in a surreal way, giving lots of hidden messages, questions, and daring eyes that says women will keep trying.

The playground scene has shown the fear of lack, which arguing Silverman's idea of showing what we call "Women's Power" on screen in order to change the community thoughts, preferring to show more weakness, obedience also vanishing the character that represents women "the young girl", accepting more (Mulvey 1975: 6) statement "Once this –woman's role- has been achieved, her meaning in the process is at an end". With hanging the lead character, killing her, cutting from her dress to play with it, it's all covered by the patriarchal thoughts of stopping women's progress, but into surrealism. The film's scenes was also open, leaving a space for every woman to remember her oneself, and where her life has been partially taken from her with this patriarchal rules that Middle East still live in.



Agreeing with (Silverman 1992: 55) “The dominant fiction forms the stable core around which a notion’s and a period’s “reality” coheres” the film is talking pure reality about the Middle East women rights issues and what women face. Avoiding changing the reality to represent women in a false image was on purpose so a community can face this ugly truth and the film can be a wakeup call to the audience.

Feminist theories are writings to confirm women’s reality of oppression and –through film critics- can show how women were treated in both reality and in front of the camera to assure her obedience to the man’s world. But women, through generations- has grown up, fought socially and cinematically to own their rights. Yet the fight hasn’t end, and women will keep going till they gain all what they seek from Equality to Freedom.

## PRODUCTION PROCESS

### ***SONSUZ UZAY*- SHORT FILM TREATMENT**

Logline: A girl can face a lot of challenges, would she react or just surrender?

Genre: Drama.

Length: 10 minutes.

Audience age: +12.

*Sonsuz Uzay* is a short film, based on an Egyptian short story called “A Dike”, aims to show the feelings of loss, depress and challenge that many women in our world face. This film is for all age audiences after 12 years old. It contains a principle of social feminism as women should try to face and overcome the challenges and beat it, also it argues the feminism principle of (Equality) as many women never had the chance to experience it. Sonsuz Uzay also speaks for (Freedom) that many women never knew, and when women search for their freedom they mostly hit the society “wall” that prevents them to express their feeling, hopes and achieve their own goals.

*Sonsuz Uzay* is –mostly- a silent film. The shooting is in one location where all the characters are in parted rooms, as a reflection to the girl’s soul and what she feels in her life journey. The characters are:

- 1- A girl – Yasmeen Najmanova
- 2- Old woman- Alla Serimoglu
- 3- 30es woman- Ebru comlekci
- 4- Kids

### Sonsuz Uzay – Summary

This film is about the feeling of loss, referred to it by the (Space) of the location the girl goes into. The film begins with an Arabic sentence, will be translated into English:

“We will not wait till this darkness collapses us and fall into the abyss, we are running to it, gasping like a panting dog in the incendiary deserts.”

“Here we are, sharing only one old brown bread, as we share this sun-ray coming through the window” as a voice over. The girl begin to walk through this semi-dark, misty place and stops on the first “room” and start her own dance, she is revolving around herself and feeling free then, she cross to the other a room’s wall.

Going to the other room the girl will see an old woman trying to repair old clothes of hers. The woman is cursing in a low voice and points her curses to an empty chair. The girl cross this lady and goes to a corridor where she thought she will find pictures of old arts and an old carpet but all her (visual thoughts) vanishes. So she cross to room number 3.

In this room, the girl will find a woman, pointing her sight to nothing on the room floor, and across the room we will see a finished picture of the woman, but the picture will be burned. So the girl is watching all that in sadness.

A children’s voice made her optimist and she walks to find from where it comes.

The girl found the children are playing so she decided to join. She begins to play, the train game, and jumping rope.

When the girl jumps the rope she will fall, so a boy decided to wrap the rope around her neck, and the children helped him (they are girls and boys). Then they broke her neck.

The girl is on the floor, powerless, while children are cutting from her light pink dress some pieces to make kites. She looks at them, then she decided to get up, turn around and cross the play ground through another wall, and hide behind it, with the word (we will not wait) repeats.

#End.

### **Location**

Film is taken on one location that has the rooms and the out- space, which can be the playground. This place is located in Karakoy, called “Saint Pierre Han”. The place has a historic background as it was first bank in the Ottoman Empire. It needed a permission for filming. It’s a 2 days shooting.

## **Atmosphere**

Mostly, this film needs a dark atmosphere with low cold lights. The playground is the only place which will be open to full natural light. Also, rooms are exposed to natural lights but it was played well to add the depressed atmosphere and light was well used to achieve the goal of the film.

As film is mostly silent, the mix between the still camera and moving camera is giving the “irritating feeling” that the audience must feel. The space of location that is not felled with heavy decoration but old walls and cracked place was a symbol of the old traditions that it doesn’t have any relation with any religion, it’s just an old traditions that should have erased from our communities but it still exists.

The film style was inspired by “Film Noir”. Film Noir is about the dark side, and people either embrace it willingly or fall into it accidentally. As we all have periods of our lives which life gets dark, we have disappointments as well, this darkness was the perfect way to represent the film’s drama and people would like to watch it because it reflects on their darkest side deep in their conscious.

## **Cost:**

The film is personally funded.

*Sonsuz Uzay – The Script*

Scene (1)

Inside/ Morning

A girl is walking through a dark space inside a closed place, not recognized

A voice over – In Arabic

“We will not wait till this darkness collapses us and fall into the abyss, we are running to it, gasping like a panting dog in the incendiary deserts.”

“Here we are, sharing only one old brown bread, as we share this sun-ray coming through the window”

The girl is going to a room and start revolving around herself, then walking to a wall, cross through it.

## Scene (2)

Inside/ Morning

The girl finds a woman repairs clothes and cursing. The girl left her and cross through another wall through the next place.

## Scene (3)

Inside/ Morning

The girl finds herself in a wide room, she thinks of arts and beautiful paintings, so these paintings are on the wall and there is an Iranian old rug on the floor and a gramophone plays great music. The girl is watching the place with admiration then it suddenly vanishes.

## Scene (4)

The girl is going to another room, where she finds an old lady sitting in a pare room but a picture beside her. The picture is the woman herself and suddenly, it burns.



## Scene (5)

### Outside/ Morning

The girl finds children and wants to play with them. She went to the group and started playing while a boy among the group hated her, so while she plays the jumping rope she fell. The boy is telling his group to wrap the rope around her neck. The girl fell dead.

### Scene (6) – continuous from (5)

The group of children cuts the girl's dress and make kites, plays with it while the girl is watching. The girl gets up, looking at them then leaving the playground through a wall, hiding there alone.

#End

## ***Sonsuz Uzay* Filming Process**

As all arts in the world, filmmaking is a hard work, and a teamwork. In *Sonsuz Uzay*

It was a challenge to complete the production on time as many difficulties has faced the filmmaker such as having the right location to make this film. As a foreign it was hard finding such a location that can give such variety also being in one place. Also finding the cast and crew is not an easy job that it needs a special person to find them, but the filmmaker was successful to find after a hard research such a very small team that was willing to help by the time.

Film Elements, such as music and song, was a challenge to use, with the mix between every scene and try to keep the harmony. Costumes and make up was designed to reflect on the feelings and characters, from an old traditional lady to a mid- aged depressed woman and in the opposite the young girl with pink clothes as she just has begun her life.

To make a storytelling such like *Sonsuz Uzay* is not easy, as the film is not silent, yet it doesn't have any dialogues, so filmmaker should keep the filmic rhythm in order to keep the film interesting.

## **Surrealism inside *Sonsuz Uzay***

*Sonsuz Uzay* is a “metaphor” for every woman story. Above, I have focused on the Middle Eastern women problems and how cinema has dealt with during the ages, but the reality says that women –even in the west- still have the same dilemma, that’s why surrealism was needed to cover the whole “women’s world” in East and West. Let’s begin with the film name, a Turkish name, which was confusing to the audiences as the subtitles was in English, and the voice over was in Arabic, but it was made on purpose to reflect on the internationalism I’m seeking behind the film.

Music was a mix from Eastern and Western music. Some people would think it’s just to highlight the difference between the meanings of “women rights” between East and West. It is partially true, but there is more meaning into it, with the purposed cut in the rhythm, it always develop uncomfortable feeling with nervousness to the audience, which is necessary to feel the drama in the scene. The famous pop song “Dancing Queen” by Abba was chosen to give this push of happiness and being the prime of (the playing) act that was cut after a very short time to express that this happiness won’t last longer.

In *Sonsuz Uzay*, surreal separated scenes are expressing women feeling of loss and disappointment from the surrounding society. A woman who tries to keep moving while everything and everyone around her breaks her spirit and stop her moving towards her goals.

A teen-age girl performs a woman's life from the beginning. Walking into the unknown should be scary, but in the young age we "as humans" are furious and have the spirit of open possibilities, we are not scared of anything and we are thinking that life has open doors and opportunities leading to everything we seek. The "Dervish Sufi dance" is a sublimity dance that upgrades feelings and body over the flaws of humanity as a young spirit with no experience in life has no idea what would it faces. But as a woman, she hits a wall.

Representing the family treatment- especially old members- towards dreams and ambitions of a woman was important to keep it unspoken, leaving the wide thinking of the female audience working alone, searching for what was her own ambitions that her family had kept just because she is a woman.

Art, painting, and music are the ultimate beauty of life that ease souls. The oldness of materials like "Gramophone" is nostalgic, throwing back the memories of good times when life was easier and somehow the human being struggles were less. The girls gaze to the pictures that beautifully painted reflecting on her eager to be beautiful, free and happy. The last picture "horse- eagled girl" is a strong metaphor for the absolute freedom, taking off the chains that stopping her from develop.

It was obvious that the needle of gramophone was in the wrong place while it seems to be working. In the girl's fancies it's working but on reality it's not. We still in an old

place with old fallen walls that reflects on the patriarchal society views. There is no beauty as pictures will disappear, gramophone is not working, and the old walls lasts.

Passing the wall is trying to move on in life, so the girl's passed to find a woman sitting without any moves looking to the emptiness with a picture of her besides her chair, but this middle- aged woman is having a frozen look to "nothing". When someone lose the goal of his life it turns to emptiness on his mind, sometimes this loss freezes the soul and you stop hoping for better tomorrow. It burns the other dreams when you lose the main goal, and that's what happened to the "picture" of the woman. Surrealism here was on the empty room itself, as no one actually in the room that seems like a prison the community can put women inside it. Pointing the woman gaze into the emptiness reflects on the women's psychology when spirit is broken, it burns and can't be repaired. The only action the woman did was raising the gaze to the young girl and her picture while she was colored, in an explaining meaning and warning one too, as she warns the young girl in front of her not to end up like her.

This time the girl has found an open door so she passed it, sad but not hopeless, in metaphor of finding the light at the end and pursue your dreams after all the bad events that she passed. The kids' scene was delicate and critical at the same time, as getting your children to do such a violence scene was hard on the director emotionally and practically but it was important to complete the story. For sure the kids are not representing kids, it was another metaphor for a community of people with two faces, the angelic face that in a point can turn to a monster. This kind of community that encourage women to get their

rights and “support” them, and in a moment the turn on her demands when it comes to freedom and equality.

Most of women stops in a short term of fighting for the rights of freedom and equality, there ambition is killed in the process. The rest of women tries to get up again and again, but it takes stages of breaks and hiding behinds walls before a woman decide to get up again and return to the ultimate fight for her right.

### **“A Dike” A writer’s story**

Nashwa Badran is an Egyptian writer born in 1985. She graduated from faculty of literature. After studying Arabic language in 2009. Nashwa’s love for writing short stories began very early as she wrote her first short story when she was 10 years old. Nashwa’s writing was characterized by the delicacy of style and quality as her passion for Arabic language reflected on her stories and gave it a different taste.

Nashwa is known of her great storytelling and plot twists that made her one of the young modern writers who doesn’t have one writing style. She is not limited in one way of writing but she is always focusing around women specially the oriental woman as Nashwa has discussed women oppressions through her writing about solitude, exile and psychological separation from society.

As women in the oriental countries are restrained with male traditions and laws, Nashwa discussed these problems with a simple writing style. As she is coming from a small town,

not a country side nor a city, Nashwa was in between, writing about country women and city women both professionally as her hometown allowed her to interact with the both and she proved through her stories that women in both sides have the same spirit, expectations, dreams and aims. Now Nashwa Badran is writing her first long novel.

### **Director Statement**

Finding the right actors for a film like *Sonsuz Uzay* would have been a hard work if the director doesn't know the group who worked with. The director had worked with them a couple of times before preparing this film. Having an understandable language between the director and the actors in the key of the film success. Also, a director of photography who has the passion and the cinematic language along with the director would ease the work on set.

Women problems in the Middle East were always in my mind since I grew up and see what's going on around me. As an Egyptian, I'm a part of the Middle East society, living under its rules, which I never understood. Man's word is unrepeatable, man's needs are above your needs, and man's oppression is the right thing, spiritually and religiously! I lived for a long time trying to do what I love, which is travel around the world and studying cinema was all I'm seeking for as a grown up. My mother always encouraged me but when it came to this we hit a wall! A wall of society rules and also, a father agreement, and a brother blessings. Of course it didn't happen and I waited so long till I could do that.

I met the writer of (A Dike) eight years ago, where we both can't do what we want. Nashwa just owned a pen and a pile of papers... and I have my imagination. When (A Dike) was written I told her one day I will film it so I can express our own feelings towards the world that we live in. a world full of women but yet, it's a man's world. I have established a focus group to know if these short scenes, seemingly not related but strangely connected, short film, that named *Sonsuz Uzay* or the endless space, reflect on their feelings and it was the answer that kept me going on making this film. It was much related to each one of them in a different way, every woman of them remembered something happened in her life by the oppression of a man that prevent them from improving themselves. I dedicate this film to all of these women, those women who feel they are going on an endless circle of preventions.



## **Filmography**

| No. | Name                          | Year | Director            |
|-----|-------------------------------|------|---------------------|
| 1   | Lover, Come Back              | 1961 | Delbert Mann        |
| 2   | Oh, from Eve                  | 1962 | Fatten Abd Elwahab  |
| 3   | No condolences for women      | 1979 | Henry Barakat       |
| 4   | I want a solution             | 1975 | Saeed Marzook       |
| 5   | Tyranny of woman              | 1984 | Nadir Galal         |
| 6   | Wekalet Albalah               | 1982 | HussamEldin Mustafa |
| 7   | Taxi Driver                   | 1976 | Martin Scorsese     |
| 8   | Clockwork Orange              | 1971 | Stanly Kubrick      |
| 9   | 9 to 5                        | 1980 | Colin Higgins       |
| 10  | Baby Boom                     | 1987 | Charles Shyer       |
| 11  | Working Girl                  | 1989 | Mick Nicols         |
| 12  | The day I become a woman      | 2000 | Marzieh Meshkini    |
| 13  | The Stoning of Suraya M.      | 2008 | Cyrus Nowrasteh     |
| 14  | Sleepless Nights              | 2003 | Hani Khalifa        |
| 15  | Scheherazade, Tell me a story | 2009 | Yousry Nasrallah    |

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