

**FEMALE FLÂNERIE AND THE NEXUS OF THE STAR
IN LENI RIEFENSTAHL'S *DAS BLAUE LICHT* (1932)**

by

STEPHANIE REVELL

**B.A., The University of Alberta, 2006
B.A. (Hons.) The University of Alberta, 2010**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF**

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Germanic Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

April 2013

© Stephanie Revell, 2013

Abstract

This paper seeks to contribute to the search for the female flâneur in Leni Riefenstahl's figure of Junta in the 1932 mountain film *Das blaue Licht*. It will use the literature from and of Weimar modernity and feminist cultural theory and contributes to the project of “understanding female subjectivity” in women's studies and cultural studies. Here *understanding* is informed by the search for the female flâneur in modernity, and *female subjectivity* is understood as a visible and “spectacular” one consisting in the occupation and manipulation of modernity's images. I will introduce the phrase “*nexus of the star*” to incorporate the various terms and discussions surrounding this experience, and explain how female flânerie informs its definition. This paper acknowledges the term *flâneuse* as traditionally used to refer to a potential female flâneur, but does not engage with it here. This paper also acknowledges the use of such phrases as “modern man” which are only used and intended in their original contexts signifying the “modern subject.”

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Figures.....	iv
1 Introduction.....	1
Provocations, Transitions, Confessions	1
German Cultural Studies and Modernity's Transitions	2
Provocation and the Use of Flânerie.....	6
Spectacular Subjectivity	8
The Nexus of the Star	10
2 Flânerie and its Terms	13
Subjectivity, Spatiality and Visuality	13
Modernity's Subjective Infinities.....	15
Spatiality and Cinema.....	19
The Problem of Female Spectatorship.....	22
The Elusive Flâneur	24
Female Flânerie	27
Mountain Flânerie	31
3 <i>Das blaue Licht</i> and the Crisis of Perception.....	35
Tourism, Gender and Beyond	35
Historia della Junta: An Exceptional Individual	38
Narrative Media: The Women of Mountain- and Street Films	40
Provocation: Cultural Studies and Weimar Berlin	44
The Crisis of Perception.....	46
4 Conclusion: Spectacular Subjects and Self-Desire	51
Confession	52
Bibliography.....	55

List of Figures

Figure 1: Leni Riefenstahl as Junta in Das blaue Licht (1932).	34
--	----

1 Introduction

Provocations, Transitions, Confessions

This paper studies Leni Riefenstahl's *Das blaue Licht* (1932) as part of the current project of “understanding female subjectivity” in women's studies and cultural studies, where here *understanding* is informed by the search for the female flâneur in modernity, and *female subjectivity* is understood as a visible and “spectacular” one consisting in the occupation and manipulation of modernity's images. This paper will see this understanding and its resultant subject to be manifested in the phenomenon of the (female) star as seen through Riefenstahl's own life and creation and enactment of Junta in the film. I will introduce the phrase “*nexus of the star*” to incorporate the various terms and discussions surrounding this experience, and explain how female flânerie informs its definition.

The ambivalence of Riefenstahl as an active female figure and producer of images introduces a discussion of the possibilities and contradictions inherent in a female subjectivity based on appearing and visibility. The terms *provocation* and *confession* will be used to structure the discussion and to introduce specific developments in German Studies. Provocation implies stimulus, desire and identity and unites many aspects of this study. Confession describes aspects of individuality and religiosity found in the nexus of the star and particularly in female flânerie and allows connection to other academic interests. As a scholar I am provoked to study certain ideas and images: Riefenstahl's gaze, Junta's gaze, the attractive familiarity of the burgeoning metropolis, the question of celebrity, religion and fascism—but most of all, a desire to see myself in these images is what undoubtedly provokes. Hence the question of confession in the literature as well—understanding female subjectivity through visuality and confession becomes a salient theme.

As a result, studies of this nature ask: what does it mean to construct subjectivity through visibility and images? What does it mean to exist as an image? What does it mean when an image looks back? Is appearing modern through images an empowering way of constructing subjectivity? In answering these questions, *this paper proposes that the provocation of Leni Riefenstahl as seen through the nexus of the star in her own life and in Das blaue Licht provides an example of the creation and enactment of an affirmative and empowering "spectacular" female subject position in modernity.*

German Cultural Studies and Modernity's Transitions

This paper will present a discussion of female flânerie, as well as questions of feminist cultural studies and German cultural studies. Not coincidentally, the questions of female flânerie and feminist cultural studies are similar. Both interrogate the relationship between subjectivity and gendered spectatorship in modernity with particular emphasis on the problems of visibility and the gaze. These areas look at literature, film and female spectatorship and ask how to theorize such media as a feminist. They recognize the duality of woman's position as a consuming and producing figure in both modernity and in scholarship (Walters 23-8). In the process of creating subjectivity women consume and produce images of themselves and the nature of this relationship is a central problem in feminist cultural studies. And this paper proposes that Riefenstahl illuminates these questions through both her life and this film. Riefenstahl's particular place in Germany's history necessitates commentary on its position within German scholarship and to understand the topic in *national* terms.

David Crew invites scholars to engage in a more historical German cultural studies, especially one concerned with *Alltagsgeschichte*, the history of daily life (Crew 53-4). He

believes this concentration is successfully achieved through methods of feminist historiography and gender studies, of which this paper is a part. These areas necessarily reject dominant historical narratives in favor of the stories surrounding the minutiae of everyday life which includes material culture, body culture, advertisements, and especially studies of cinema and spectatorship. Crew's emphasis on an historical *German* cultural studies also stresses the importance of mass culture and mass consumption, another area with which feminist historiography engages, and that German scholars and their theoretical descendants (such as those of the Frankfurt School) have been long debating.

Crew acknowledges the importance of popular and material culture in (women's) history in opposition to “mandarin academic traditions of 'high culture' that dismisses mass culture as mindless and debased” (apparently a feature in the tradition of *Germanistik*, distinguishing from the cultural shift to *German Studies*), and especially addresses the idea that the consumers of mass culture are also its producers (48-9). This literature of this paper also emphasizes this: how did German modernity consume and appropriate an emerging mass culture, and how do questions of gender fit here? This paper uses the genre of the mountain film (*Bergfilm*) partly to answer this question.

Histories of mass culture in German Studies do address the cinema and spectatorship. And although the history of German cinema is one of the best researched fields in modern German cultural history, Crew believes “there is still much to be learned about the everyday meanings and uses of the cinema in the past” (54). Therefore, studies emerge concerned with gender, as “women were the most important element(s) of the early filmgoing audiences, and the filmmakers began to shape their products in ways they thought would appeal to women” (51). This paper must then address how a *female* filmmaker did this, and with what consequences. Historians need to acknowledge the importance of “symbolic and expressive

needs [...] and to explore symbolic practices through the use of more unorthodox sources” (52-3). It is the question of understanding female subjectivity through the everyday practices of visibility, and this paper argues, through the nexus of the star and its own symbolic practices, that will contribute to Crew's described field.

In addition to these concerns of high culture versus mass culture, grand narratives versus everyday life, and the interaction between the production and consumption of culture in German Studies, this paper identifies another timely discussion in the study of Riefenstahl, *Das blaue Licht*, and the nexus of the star. This paper indeed theorizes this film through female flânerie, and as an exceptional case in construction and use of imagery in creating female subjectivity. However, the film is commonly seen as a “myth of modernity.” Sabine Hake describes the popular mountain film genre as modernist, but that it also resists “any simplistic equation with (pre)fascism or reactionary modernism,” and represent instead a “privileged expression of the dialectics of myth and modernity” (Hake *National Cinema* 45). Just as scholars of Riefenstahl notice “her uncanny oscillation between disempowerment and empowerment” (*Riefenstahl Screened* 1), so does the mountain film oscillate between rejecting and embracing modernity, as demonstrated through its technological necessities and yet mythical reliances, offering a “model and counter-model of modernity” (Hake 46). Riefenstahl portrays the archetypal “*neue Frau*,” and the creation of mountain films required modern technology. But this paper also emphasizes the mythical element of this modernity, and in this sense connects to larger discussions in German Studies about the persistence of religious thought and confessional practices in modern German culture.

George S. Williamson believes the longing for myth and the dialogue between theology and the secular world is closely connected in German history and that this must inform current scholarship. He sees centuries of a particularly German longing (*Sehnsucht*)

for myth reaching back to the philological scholarship of Herder and forward to an understanding of a “collective history” after the Second World War (Williamson 3). His analysis describes a transition, just as the literature informing this paper. As the literature of flânerie and modernity describes the transformation of private to public life, Williamson describes Germany's enforced transition from a religious to a secular community and how this played out in the “supposedly secular realms of nineteenth-century art and scholarship.” In the process he maintains that Germany developed a discourse on myth to “express just what had been lost in the transition to modernity” and that this discourse was “infused with the rhetoric, narratives and assumptions of Christian theology,” and this is especially prominent in the persistence of confessional and theological thought in the modern era (3-4, 7). Although this paper will not allow a larger discussion of this, the nexus of the star and female subjectivity will later be discussed in this light.

In addition to the flâneuristic concerns of a transition from private to public life, and humanist concerns with a transition from religious life to a secular life infused with religiosity, this paper identifies another important “transition” regarding German modernity and gender. Liz Conor emphasizes a “dramatic shift” regarding modernity and femininity. As visibility came to define the modern experience, and women gained increased access to public life, images of women became images of modernity. Conor believes that “for the first time in the West, modern woman understood self-display to be part of the quest for mobility, self-determination and sexual identity” (Conor 29). In addition to the noted transitions from private to public, religion to religious secularism, Conor maintains that for women there was also a “dramatic shift from inciting modesty to inciting display, from self-effacement to self-articulation,” and that this “is the point where feminine visibility began to be productive of women's modern subjectivities” (30). This paper acknowledges these transitions, focusing on

the third and its expression of feminine visibility through the nexus of the star. Private became public, religion became secular religion, and women became visible for the first time and were offered subjectivity as a result of the images created through these transitions and interactions. How did these transitions interact? Did one transition compensate for or simply complement another? This paper focuses on this last transition and sees their unification in the nexus of the star.

The following section of this introduction will provide a closer look at some of the important terms in the paper, such as: 1) the notion of provocation and how to “use” *flânerie*, 2) the appearing/spectacular woman, 3) what I mean by the “nexus of the star” and other key terms in the literature of modernity. It will then be followed by chapters on the more specific “provocations” of Weimar cinema, mountain films and Riefenstahl, and then the confessional aspect of the nexus of the star and its meanings.

Provocation and the Use of Flânerie

In the process of writing this paper it became clear that this study is itself an act of *flânerie*, a *reaction*. This metaphor is offered with full knowledge of the risk of extending the notion of *flânerie* past its already pervasive limits, but offered also to acknowledge such pervasiveness. Images and instances of people, stories, culture—objects of inquiry—appear in time to the modern scholar, the descendant of the *flâneur*, as signs and symbols that provoke and demand interpretation. Studies and more stories are formed and told as a reaction to such provocation.

Anke Gleber begins her short phenomenology of *flânerie* with Nietzsche's thoughts on the “reactive talents” of modern academics as they respond to the stimuli modernity provides (Gleber 129-30). These talents are those of the *flâneur*. Gleber explains that Nietzsche's

“modernity” is characterized by an omnipresent sense of multiplication and differentiation that weakens one's spontaneity and ensures an incomplete engagement of any modern subject with any stimulus; there are too many stimuli. As a result Nietzsche maintains that,

a kind of adaptation to this flood of impressions takes place: men unlearn spontaneous action, they merely react to stimuli from outside. They spend their strength partly in assimilating things, partly in defense, partly in opposition. *Profound weakening of spontaneity*: the historian, the critic, analyst, the interpreter, the observer, the collector, the reader—all of them reactive talents—all science!
(Nietzsche *Will to Power* 47).

As a modern subject presented with certain academic stimuli, the particular perceptual responses of flânerie explains one's choices. But there is also an element of agency in this reaction, stimuli stimulating for a reason. A choice of study is thus also an act of desire and consumption in a public way. The arcades are known to be the library. As the early metropolitan female walker sees herself in the arcades and images of the street, so does the scholar-flâneur in the spaces of the library, where the search for the female flâneur among its books and archived images is currently underway. This study has made it clear that this practice itself is an act of flânerie, and that its results can be used to inform other definitions of female subjectivity, such as the nexus of the star. This study joins this search, and reacts to the provocation of the figure and image of Leni Riefenstahl as Junta in *Das blaue Licht*. But why provocation?

First, this provocation means many things. Riefenstahl's unique historical position as a woman and prolific German artist exerts an undeniable pull for those of the flâneuristic persuasion. Quick, curious and vaguely interested glances at the popular history of the twentieth century demand attention to this figure and her work: Riefenstahl's images comprise a large part of the last century. And to those with questions of gender in mind, Riefenstahl provokes even more. Her place in Weimar Berlin, modernity's testing ground and

golden age, further provokes as a phantasmagoria of modernity's figures and images pass the German Studies student by. *This* flânerie then collects pieces of cultural history that map the development of the metropolis, body culture, modern dance, film, fascism, mountains, and photography—considered with the questions and complications of gender.

In order to further understand the element of provocation and desire in seeing and using images as a scholar-flâneur and subject, it is necessary to look back at the definition of female subjectivity provided at the beginning of the paper. “Understanding female subjectivity” involved perceiving “understanding” through the experiential and perceptual modalities of female flânerie, and “female subjectivity” as a visible and “spectacular” one consisting in the occupation and manipulation of modernity's images. The example of Riefenstahl and the nexus of the star demonstrate this. Before looking at other terms important for this paper (such as visibility, the gaze and the nexus of the star), this section looks first at this “spectacular” female subjectivity.

Spectacular Subjectivity

Conor writes about “feminine visibility” in the 1920s, and presents terms regarding female subjectivity that are useful for this study, such as: techniques of appearing, and the “appearing/spectacular” woman¹. She begins by asserting the “image-status of female existence” in a modernity that privileges visibility, and interestingly, the preface to her work also reads as a personal confession. Conor admits she “took pleasure” in her looks throughout her life, and carried the contradictions of this experience with her into academia (Conor *xiv*). Her work asks how women create subjectivity through visibility and addresses the complications of doing so. Even though she does assert that appearing modern and

¹ Liz Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (2004).

existing through visibility was an empowering act of agency, scholars point out that she never explains why appearing modern and existing as an image “enhances women's power and independence” (Roberts 141). This paper claims the same: as seen through the experience of the female flâneur and the nexus of the star, woman must create a subjectivity based on objectivity and self-desire. However, this paper will also elaborate Conor's unanswered assertion that appearing modern and *appearing* in general is an empowering position of female subjective agency. The nexus of the star and its confessional and religious intersections will demonstrate this.

Conor's work is important as it describes modernity's perceptual transition that brought women into public space, and into a public space filled with images of woman. As women were permitted to construct a public identity, they had to do so through images, and the complications that appearing in public brought (signs of sexuality, availability, and illusion). She also helps us understand modernity in a way that is useful to our study, emphasizing the alteration of human perception and the crucial correlation between modern subjectivity and spectatorship (Conor 14-6). Vision was privileged above other senses and traditional divides between subject and object were intensified through new viewing technologies. The “appearing woman” was a new subject in public; the term describes woman's historical appearance in public as well as her new identity based in visibility. This aforementioned “dramatic shift” is the “point where feminine visibility began to be productive of women's modern subjectivities” as women began to “occupy the images that spectacularized them” (29-30). These spectacular images, as we will see, were male-determined and imbued with the consequences of objectivity: appearing meant appearing as a (sexual) object. Nonetheless, “for the first time in the West, modern woman understood self-display to be part of the quest for mobility, self-determination and sexual identity (Conor 29).

As we will see, female flânerie also involves occupying an object position as a subject position. As feminist cultural historians read female-made images and learn how women created subjectivity, they must confront this object occupation. However, Connor sees this anew and asserts that “we must read the woman-object not only as one of the impediments holding women back from subject status, but also as a practice of identity in itself” (31). She believes that identification in objectivity is not to renounce all claim to subjectivity for “woman hopes in this way to find self-realization under the aspect of herself as a thing” (30-1). Connor's work asks scholars of female subjectivity to ask how “being a spectacular subject” can be an affirmative act. The example of Riefenstahl as a subject creating identity through objective imagery illuminates this assertion. More specifically, however, Riefenstahl does so through the “nexus of the star.”

The Nexus of the Star

The “nexus of the star” and its empowering, and religious intersections demonstrate the affirmative subject position for women in modernity. I introduce this phrase to incorporate the various discussions surrounding stardom and to emphasize its “connections” to flânerie, as Hake describes the flâneur as the “nexus between modernity and space” (Hake *Topographies* 135). Scholarship on stardom emphasizes that the discipline is young and lacks definitive terms: there is as yet “no generally applicable theory of stardom” and most studies “take a particular definition for granted without making it explicit” (Garncarz 116).

One confronts various terms that emphasize the industrial, religious, and societal (spectatorial) aspects of the star: the *phenomenon* of the star/stardom, *technologies* and *industries* of stardom, the star *system*, and notions of celebrity and fame. The star as a phenomenon connotes mystery, religion and fate. Terms like technology and industry suggest

the star's modern manufactured and consumable qualities that stimulate and capitalize on desire. Finally, notions of celebrity and fame suggest a more secular sociological need to identify exceptional individuals capable of bearing the burden of collective desire and existence through collective vision. As Graeme Turner elaborates, celebrity “crosses the border between the public and the private worlds, preferring the personal, the private or 'veridical' self, as the privileged object of revelation” (Turner 8).

Turner's work further explains the importance of studying the star and elaborates on these three elements. Celebrity is a genre of representation and a discursive effect; it is a commodity traded by the promotions, publicity and media industries that produce these representations and their effects; and “it is a cultural formation that has a social function we can better understand” (Turner 9). The phrase “nexus of the star” attempts to incorporate these intersections of religion, industry and secular sociology that emphasizes its function as a means of connection: from the secular world to the infinite, from private to public life, from unknown subject to heroic (religious) individual.

Indeed, Turner describes celebrity in religious terms, and maintains that the “cultural function of celebrity today contains significant parallels with the functions normally ascribed to religion” (6). This paper stresses the modern and yet still religious emphases on “exceptional individuals” (as Riefenstahl as Junta), which will connect to later explorations of modernity in this paper. Turner mentions that critiques of celebrity condemn this very notion: a worrying cultural shift that privileges the visual and the problems and limits of achieving absolute individuality and subjectivity in modernity.

Richard Dyer's work highlights the discomfort with the nexus of the star and the individual. Dyer believes studying the star demonstrates how society used stars as a means of thinking about the individual, as “they articulate the promise and the difficulty that the

notion of the individual presents for all of us who live by it” (Dyer as quoted in Turner 25). Just as the emphasis on founding a secular myth in modernity creates contradiction and ambivalence, so does the mandate of the star in modernity, and this characterizes its ontology. While stars might represent individualized social types they do so by actively reconciling competing principles—personal identity with social identity, and individualism with conformity. He concludes that the celebrity then “is an embodiment of a discursive battleground on the norms of individuality and personality within a culture” (25). The significance of the religious associations of celebrity will be later discussed, as it is this notion that will inform the conclusion and the elaboration on an empowering modern subjectivity through visibility. The next chapter will examine the salient terms of the literature of *flânerie* as well as the figure and questions of gender.

2 Flânerie and its Terms

Subjectivity, Spatiality and Visuality

There are roughly three groups of terms one encounters in the literature of flânerie. They involve such disciplines as psychoanalysis, film theory, and especially feminist cultural theory and can be addressed through: notions of subjectivity, spatiality, and visuality and the gaze. A brief treatment of modernity here is necessary, considering that the flâneur is *the* “pivotal figure of modernity,” and that the two enjoy a symbiotic relationship; the flâneur is both a “product of and at the same time constitutive of modernity” (Gleber 129). Modernity and the flâneur are thus preoccupied with how these three terms interact: what is a subject and how is it formed through these constantly changing alignments of (urban) space, the body, desire and vision. The necessity of definition is echoed by feminist cultural studies, which asks how feminism and notions of subjectivity and space interact to create images of and meaning for women. The activity of knowledge producing and definition-making in modernity (the activity of the flâneur) using such a multi-disciplinary approach can be understood through the metaphor of the map.

Steve Pile uses the metaphor of the map and mapping to understand how contemporary disciplines such as human geography, sociology and psychoanalysis, perceive the human subject. This metaphor highlights the difficulty of mapping the subject, as it is something that is “always on the move” and connotes Enlightenment logic with its “history of subordination.” However, mapping also connotes the more approachable idea of “wayfinding,” an activity that is continually in process, takes accommodating turns and emphasizes contact with the real (Pile 1). Maps acknowledge the well-travelled ruts of previous authority and authorship, but this mapping of the subject as wayfinding reveals the

map's fragility and fluidity. Pile asserts that “the mapping of the subject continually reveals ruptures and tears” of how the subject itself changes and masquerades according to discursive powers of authority and authorship. The map reveals our fluid identity as an “allegory of power and knowledge” and reveals the authoritatively-constituted notions of space as an “allegory of space-time” (Pile 49-50).

Pile's metaphor of the map is important for a study of *flânerie* and *Das blaue Licht*. The map emphasizes knowledge-making, uncovering, discovery, adventure and movement. It connotes urban plans and their sociological catalysts and consequences. Careful mapping enjoys an almost erotic *flâneurist* regard of things and places, where they are now and how they've changed. The map reminds us that modernity's individualistic ambitions are spatially determined. These are indeed the activities of the *flâneur*, whose home is perhaps more than just the urban streets and crowd, but the constantly changing map itself.

Not only does Riefenstahl's film exhibit the story of an “exceptional individual” enacting visual desire and movement in a particularly charged space, Junta's untimely death, the final determinant defining her as a saintly martyr, comes in fact after the creation of a crudely-drawn map. Vigo the artist draws a map to demonstrate his new knowledge of the blue light and to uncover Junta's secret grotto. He also seeks to demystify her and to make her an acceptable female subject in the eyes of the town, and to of course hoard the crystals. The map is the catalyst for Junta's death. She is consequently hardly demystified, but rather the opposite, and the intentions and consequences of Riefenstahl's imagery raises the question of female self-representation raised by feminist cultural theory.

A brief look at modernity will emphasize its predominant concerns with visuality and extreme individuality, and thus the question of subjectivity. This in turn will introduce our three areas of definition (subjectivity, visuality and space), which will also be informed by

the concerns of feminist cultural theory. Pile's assertion that this definition-making/mapping in modernity constantly reveals ruptures, tears and the knowledge of masquerade is important to keep in mind as we negotiate the complicated and contradictory results.

Modernity's Subjective Infinities

Modernity refers both to a historical period and to an experience. The term modernism develops the latter point, emphasizing various artistic reactions to such a period and experience. Anne Friedberg provides a brief definition of modernity that emphasizes its historical reality. She describes it as a “social formation coincident with late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century industrialization and urbanization [...] these changes had their first impact on capitalist, cosmopolitan cities” (Friedberg 13). Capitalism and cosmopolitanism—modernity's beginnings are of economical structures and urban sociological transformations. In addition to concerns with economics and cities, we see Baudelaire's poetic contributions to the idea of *modernité* and the need for reaction and analysis.

He recognized modernity as perceiving that which is new and fleeting in society: *le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent* (Frisby *Fragments* 6). Frisby emphasizes this transitory element and maintains that there can be no fixed, secure object of study in the accepted sense regarding modernity. Therefore, principal theorists of modernity (such as Nietzsche, Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin) are not concerned with society as a whole, but “start out from the apparent fragments of social reality,” and share this with the modernist movement itself (Frisby 5). Fragment-focused Impressionist art and literature result from such emphases on new things and fleeting moments. The particularly modern “pathos of distance” from this resulting privileging of things far, changing and obscure. Classical sociological discussions of modernity detail the tragic growing distance between subjective

and objective culture, noting that women are even more inclined to tragedy in that they have no access to the male-created world of objective culture, and thus have no capacity for subjectivity in modernity. Women are essentialized in these texts and when they do appear as figures they exist purely as metaphors of nostalgia, reminders of a lost world of myth, and symbols of a potential retreat from modern chaos to a pre-modern Utopia (Felski *Introduction*). Women appear in the texts of modernity first and foremost as performers: actresses, dancers, and of course, prostitutes.

However, issues of proximity and distance are salient feature of flânerie, film, and consequently feminism. the nexus of the star also considers this problem and pathos of proximity and distance as female spectatorship, representation and desire. Furthermore, the relation of newness and change to visuality is also apparent. Gleber's assertion that modernity is characterized by an “emphasis on the visual which appears as it primary and privileged sphere of perception” (Gleber 31) reintroduces the flâneur and his strolling as perceiving, as well as providing a new way to “look” at the concerns of Riefenstahl’s film.

However, this regarding and privileging of newness and ephemerality leads us to notions of time (and history) in modernity and its relation to subjectivity—modernity certainly did not forget what came before. Nietzsche's emphasis on the oversaturation of history in the present seems inimical to the newness of modernity. His concern for the “malady of history” questions the use of history in identity-formation, a modern subjectivity shopping experience where one chooses how to live from any available historical examples. This push for individualism is then not possible without this historical mass of other individuals, as “history is necessary above all to the man of action and power who fights a great fight and needs examples, teachers and comforters; he cannot find them among his contemporaries” (Nietzsche 101). This relates to the conscious cultivation of the

temperament of the artist and extreme individualism in the metropolis detailed by Georg Simmel.

While the specifics of Nietzsche's essay cannot be continued here, this sense of an ever-recurring past in the present is nonetheless important. Continued in the sociology of Simmel, it is that our present is characterized by constant re-occurrences of and emphases on the past, an “eternal present.” This dictates the subject's privileging of immediate experience, movement, and his changing perception of time and space, which we see occupies much of the literature from and of Weimar Germany. The subject thus understands his *modus vivendi* as constantly changing and present, but still imbued with historicism to achieve meaning. The subject recognizes the importance of his present actions, but must also negotiate the suffocating heightened consciousness of a period tragically aware of itself as a period (perhaps the *last* period). Nietzsche explains that this impending sense of multiplying alterity and infinite accumulation haunts modern man, who is “always resisting the great and continually increasing weight of the past; it presses him down, and bows his shoulders.” This subject needs the past to understand newness and himself, but his “understanding of the words 'once upon a time,' the 'open sesame' that lets in battle, suffering and weariness on mankind,” reminds him his existence is “an imperfect tense that never becomes a present,” (Nietzsche 97-8). There is tragedy then in our modern culture documented officially by Simmel as soon as the twentieth-century began, and there is also contradiction.

Daniel Bell addresses the “rampant individualism” in modern capitalist culture, where the message and reality of individual subjective aspiration outpaces actual societal means and development. He addresses the metaphysical and spatial aspirations of the individual. His description of the search for infinitely-lasting individuality will help connect female *flânerie*, the nexus of the star, and the example of *Das blaue Licht*. Bell emphasizes the new task of

man as simply that of self-definition through confrontation with new spaces and thoughts of the future:

The Western ideal was the autonomous man, who, in becoming self-determining, would achieve freedom. [There was the] opening of new geographical and social frontiers; the desire, and the growing ability, to master nature and to make oneself what one can, and even, in discarding old roots, to remake oneself altogether. What began to count was not the past but the future (Bell 16).

This future-looking individualism is rooted in an unbounded spatiality. Modern man needed to define and value only himself, but to do so he must go beyond himself into infinite space:

The enchantment of the single life became a value for its own sake [...] the deepest nature of modern man, the secret of his soul as revealed by the modern metaphysic, is that he seeks to reach out beyond himself [...] behind the chiasm of modern man is the megalomania of *self-infantilization* (Bell 49, *italics mine*).

It is apparently contradictory to desire and value autonomy and individualism but to need what is beyond and infinite to do so. This is an element of Lacanian psychoanalysis with which feminism also engages. Contradictions between the past and the future aside, Bell's arguments reinforce why discussions of modernity must engage with individuality, subjectivity and spatiality. And it is this preoccupation with "self-infantilization" in a world newly de-spiritualized that we see normalized in the nexus of the star, and thus normalized especially for women.

This paper maintains that this rampant individualism and megalomania of self-infantilization can be seen in the story of Riefenstahl's own life and the character of Junta. One scholar discusses Riefenstahl's varied and lack-lustre career pre-Hitler, and maintains that her "chief aims in life were to gain public recognition, to become famous and also to manipulate and control public reception of her work" (Trimborn 154). As Riefenstahl performed such a manipulation with *Das blaue Licht* we see she created a being who reaches

hagiographic heights and is still considered an “exceptional individual.” Furthermore, this “self-infantilization” is addressed through the fulfillment and problems of female spectatorship. Junta is saint-like and immortal, but she also indulges in the earthly pleasures of looking and being in spaces of looking, and this defines her.

Thus the individual is a salient feature of modernity, and comprehending his make-up through visuality and changing perceptions of space and time is still this section's quest.

Spatiality and Cinema

The second section of definitions addresses subjectivity, space and visuality. They are informed and reinforced by the concept of the flâneur and inter-disciplinary work in cultural studies. This section remembers the primacy of visuality and spatiality in modern identity-formation and emphasizes the centrality of subjectivity and spatiality to feminist politics.

One may approach subjectivity through a range of disciplines and meanings, and Pile's metaphor of the map again reveals a winding cartography of inter-connected theoretical signposts. He asserts that subjectivity is constructed through movement and spatiality (as implied through map-making), noting that current discussions identify the spatial home of the subject in the body, created through many different discourses. These discussions emphasize spatial metaphors as a way of comprehending the subject, a “peripatetic mode of signification” that corresponds exactly to the intentions and activity of flânerie. Movement through space and in the body thus constructs subjectivity (Pile 11,19). These spaces and bodies are however already defined through discourses that determine power relationships through certain viewing mechanisms. These motifs of movement and traveling through space figure largely in writings on the subject. But what does this really

mean, and how is subjectivity actually studied?

Pile explains that this forging of new subject positions out of the ideas of movement and travel has been bound up with the history of photography and especially cinema (22). Modernity emphasizes the real experiences of moving and looking; a subject is created through the experiences of modern tourism, photography, journalism and cinema. The object of cinema appears as the most crucial element in forging subjectivity. As this paper's concern is with film, this section emphasizes that discussions of the subject approach cinema as a construction that produces subjectivity, and that Lacanian-inflected film theory assumes the subject is constructed through visibility (Friedberg 13). The "regimes of the visual" and their manifestations in cinema are however gendered. This is then the territory of feminist theory: what is the relationship between femininity and visibility if the mechanisms of viewing are male-determined? However, to understand vision one must first understand its relation to space. Which spaces do the theories of subjectivity in modernity imply?

As we have seen, spatial metaphors are used to comprehend the subject, whose task Bell has noted involves extending himself into infinite space. Space thus implies distance and movement within it. In the discussions of modernity spaces are very real and conflicting as cities continually expand and new leisure terrains (such as mountains) become accessible. These real spaces have sociological consequences, and we may also speak of the necessary spaces between the subject and the object. This reintroduces the connection of space to visibility, and emphasizes the architectural and psychoanalytic spaces of cinema.

Space is thus an important concept for feminism as we use again the example of cinema as an explanation: the cinema as public architecture was at first not a space permitted for woman, then subsequently became one of her most frequented haunts. The cinema as cultural image-making machine highlights the problem of distance and closeness as women

confronted and enjoyed the image of their objectified selves—the newly appearing and “spectacular subject” already mentioned. Within this space are enacted the traditions of looking and space itself becomes *filled* with desire and its implied visual violence. As Pile explains, “space looks back, it is active and dynamic,” the visual practices that fill modernity’s spaces “fix the subject onto an authorized map of power and meaning” (45-6).

The male-determined traditions of viewing are continued in the spaces of the cinema. Giuliana Bruno offers the example of the modern medical amphitheatre and the spectacle of the female corpse to explain cinema’s medically fantastic female imagery. As the medical profession developed and staged dissections of the female body as a spectacle, these viewing practices became those of the cinema: “the space of cinema replaces the geography of gazes, the interaction of subject/object, the topography of the spatio-visual representation that belonged to the medical spectacle” (Bruno 75). To confront space as a woman in modernity means to physically wander into the territory of illegality (prostitution) and to recognize one’s marked presence in public as sexual object—as Conor reminds us of this double bind of appearing, but as a sexual object: “as women began to realize their modernity through practices of appearing, they complicated the significance of their visibility” (Conor, 25). *Das blaue Licht* clearly details such a confrontation: Junta is not allowed in the acceptable spaces of the town and her presence there causes a disturbance. What is however more disturbing is the desire and power represented by the spaces of her own looking, and ultimately defines her. However, it is necessary to further discuss what sort of visibility modernity’s spaces implies. This introduces the concept of the Gaze and its significance for feminist cultural theory.

“Regimes of the visual” introduce the psychoanalytic notions of the gaze, specifically the “male gaze,” and scopophilia. Lacanian film theory connects vision and desire, as Pile

explains, Lacan's radical move is to place Desire as the reason to see, and to place phallogentrism as structuring ways of seeing” (Pile 46). The concept of the gaze relies on a Lacanian description where the subject exists only as it sees itself being seen, and historically this seeing was only done and recorded by men. John Berger famously advanced this idea: men look and are the “bearers of the gaze,” and women are to be looked at.

The Problem of Female Spectatorship

This gaze is a central concept for feminist cultural studies, advanced by Laura Mulvey and her study of psychoanalysis, gender and narrative cinema. Early cinema uses the spectacle of woman as an organizing narrative force, the narrative meaning determined by the male gaze. Understanding the concept of the gaze and its significance communicates that, “the female subject is the object rather than the subject of the gaze in mainstream narrative cinema. She is excluded from authoritative vision not only at the level of the enunciation, but at that of fiction” (Kaja Silverman as quoted in Walters 54). As modernity’s real women participated in the quest for subjectivity through the visual regimes of the cinema they necessarily engaged with, enjoyed, and reproduced male-determined images. The notion of scopophilia that recurs in the literature of flânerie and here implied refers to the pleasure and control derived from viewing from a distance, the love of watching without being watched oneself. The question for feminist theory, considering that male-determined images of women dominate narrative cinema and that real women really enjoyed watching these films, and even made them, is how is female scopophilia explained? How do women adopt and enjoy a subject position requiring their own sexual objectivity?

Mulvey explains the female viewer is condemned to a narcissistic “pleasure in closeness, in reflection and identification with an image” (Walters 59). Mary Ann Doane

maintains that women cannot maintain the necessary distance from the (her) image needed to fetishize as the male viewer can. She must either narcissistically identify with objectified female characters or assume a masculinized subject position. Walters explains Doane's influential concept of the masquerade, of performing femininity to, "find some space for female resistance in the destabilization of the male look" (Walters 60). The masquerade entails the self-consciousness of pure presentness and play (not unlike the playful experience of the flâneur); it assumes the image in the most complete and radical way. The masquerade is effective in negotiating the aforementioned problems of visual identification and the problems of distance. Doane believes its "effectivity lies in its potential to manufacture a distance from the image, to generate a problematic within which the image is manipulable, producible, and readable by the woman," (Doane as quoted in Walters 60).

The search for the female flâneur asks these very questions, recognizing that an actively looking subject position devoid of the consequences of objectivity was and is impossible for women in modernity. Cinema is still a valid place to begin, regardless of its male-determined images, as women used them and continue to take pleasure in them. A study of female flânerie must incorporate fantastic images created by early cinema and their replication by women themselves. Bruno elaborates on this in her study of women and street films in early Italian cinema. Her study of one Italian female filmmaker's metaphorical and fantasmic images of streets and women affirm this masquerade. She justifies her concentration on these "worn-out images" and their emancipatory potential, and her explanation is worth quoting at length:

We ourselves might critically resist and refrain from exposing the insinuating depths of these worn-out images, these clusters of fantasies, denying the extent to which metaphors have enabled women, to whom authorship was historically denied, nonetheless to express themselves both within and against male-dominated discourse [...] the metaphor has become the means of transportation, the means for the

negotiation of a female position in representation [...] It is by traversing this very fantasmic path of female self-representation, practiced so much that it is worn out, that we might enable ourselves to map a different topography of pleasure (Bruno 228-9).

This paper then seeks to map the topography of pleasure Riefenstahl creates through the fetishized and fantasmic images of Junta and herself. Junta's earthly existence as marked body and mountain dancer, and her eternal destiny as saint do indeed represent popular metaphors of women at the time: Weimar surface culture enjoyed the dancing female spectacle while modernity's metaphors frantically turned to utopic images of timeless, holy woman: the latter to soothe the anxiety provoked by the proliferation of the former.

This paper emphasizes that these two aspects of image-making and subjectivity represented by Junta (the real, time-determined presentness of her functional body and the infinity-reaching possibilities of her sainthood) contribute to an understanding of the nexus of the star. Combined with a study of female flânerie we may begin to conceptualize female subjectivity in modernity.

This section attempted to understand how modernity emphasized identity-formation through visibility, implying a "peripatetic mode of signification" emphasizing movement, the body and desire. This paper will now provide a further look at who the flâneur was and who the female flâneur can possibly be.

The Elusive Flâneur

Although the particular beginnings of flânerie connote a privileged, solitary male activity confronting the changing spaces of capitalism, it has become the dominant mode of experiencing modernity, it has become perception itself. The flâneur is everywhere in cultural studies: his privileged bourgeois form lounging in modern art and his sociological texts and

seek to understand modernity through the activity of strolling and looking. Although *flânerie* begins with walking, it is about looking and being. Although it implies solitude and individuality, it is also about connecting with others and the questions of collectivity. An introduction to the study of *flânerie* is notably characterized by tautologies. When *flânerie* finally appears to be something, it then immediately appears to be something else. The image of the performer of *flânerie*, the *flâneur*, permeates studies in and of modernity, his activity constantly provokes despite much theoretical elusiveness. Keith Tester explains this perplexing state of affairs, emphasizing the *flâneur's* mystery and elusiveness. The *flâneur* can only be defined through the activities of *flânerie*, and the activity of definition itself is always problematic. Tester emphasizes the tautological nature of such a study and maintains that attempts at definitions are at best difficult and, at worst, “a contradiction of what the *flâneur* means. In himself, the *flâneur* is, in fact, a very obscure thing. And, therefore, he cannot be defined in himself as very more than a tautology” (Tester 7). It is in fact this focus on the problems of definition that is of interest here; Tester emphasizes the *flâneur's* preoccupation with this task as well. Tester maintains the *flâneur* was engaged in the same reflexive and hermeneutic activity as those engaged in his study. He attempts to describe the self-conscious search for self and meaning that the *flâneur* presents:

the figure, and the activity of the *flâneur* is essentially about freedom, the meaning of existence [...] and being with others in the modern urban spaces of the city. Freedom because the figure revolves around the dialectic of self-definition from outside [...]; the meaning (or lack of meaning) of existence because the figure is about the flux of life and the requirement to make its meaning for one's self [...] for these reasons, the *flâneur* has been important to the existentialist attempts to discover the secrets of being in the modern world
(Tester 8).

A study premised on defining and understanding the *flâneur* is aware that the *flâneur* himself also seeks to look, define, understand and connect. While Tester emphasizes

freedom, urbanity and “the dialectics of self-definition” his explanation also highlights the impossibility of true *flânerie* in the face of the modern industrial city. *Flânerie* as once practiced in the nineteenth century had to be re-defined (if possible) later in the twentieth century after major periods of industrialization and urban growth. *Flânerie*'s elusiveness and mystery regarding identification and definition then has a possible advantage: whatever it is, it is not always the privileged bourgeois observer. Scholars refer now to many kinds of *flânerie*; its original manifestation as a leisured stroll has evolved to imply a general way of being and perceiving in the world. Buck-Morss explains that *flânerie* exists now as a “form of perception...preserved in the characteristic fungibility of people and things in mass society [...] all of which go by the flâneur's principle of 'look, but don't touch'” (Buck-Morss as quoted in Smart 162). In addition to modern eating habits, the contemporary manifestations of *flânerie* also include, “the aural *flânerie* of the radio listener, the window-on-the-world *flânerie* of television news, [and] the insular package-tour *flânerie* associated with the mass tourist industry” (Smart 162). What Smart helps us recognize is the difficulty inherent in absolutely defining *flânerie* as a result of its multiple manifestations in our everyday lives from radio and magazines, to television, film, travel and food. This leaves us with a large area to cover, which is not possible within the scope of this paper.

The term *flânerie* has no direct translation in English singly able to carry the weight of its multiple connotations. The verb, noun and adjective refer to spheres of activity performed in order to exist in and interpret the experience of modernity. *Flânerie* can be attractively described as the “art of taking a walk,” which highlights its simple physical motion and a measured leisure experience.

But the simplicity ends there as this “art,” its discussion, and the search for its participants necessarily reach across many disciplines that practice cultural theory and

question the experience of modernity. Flânerie is both an act and a phenomenon, literally and theoretically: the flâneur did indeed idly stroll the streets of the big city, but he also produced texts that reflect this ambulatory intellectual experience. These texts are comprised of early sociological writings, photographs, and debates about cinema, cinema itself, modern advertising, and avant-garde literature. The modern flâneuristic text can be said to underlie both the images and metaphors used in popular culture and high art *and* the way in which academia approaches and records the study of this use. Flânerie and its study are therefore vastly encompassing, timely, and frustrating.

Female Flânerie

The discovery that to study flânerie is also to acknowledge its inherently gendered ontology further widens this already gaping theoretical expanse. There must be acknowledgement that the flâneur was and could only be male due to the historical realities of women, urbanity and space and that the images and metaphors arising from this phenomenon are inherently male-determined. In addition to the study of the changing nature of perception and visuality in modernity, the search for the female flâneur predictably negotiates the questions of feminist cultural theory.

To study modernity through the emphasis on the condition of experience through vision and space is to study the gendered nature of the mechanisms of viewing and spectatorship, and to ask if and how women are afforded a spectator position in this experience. And when we find that in fact they are, that women did willingly and pleurably engage in male-determined “fantasmic” self-representation in the process of understanding subjectivity, we have to question how and why this is possible, and with what outcome.

This paper will thus engage with discussions of the primacy and crisis of perception in modernity as well as with the questions asked by feminist cultural theory. What is important here is to recognize that *flânerie* began as a real physical activity conditioned by vision and experience that eventually came to characterize the most predominant mode of perceiving and being in modernity. Its historical roots associated with walking and with the streets remind us that, “historically,” walking and streets were available in a *flâneur*-friendly way only to men. Actual female walkers in public are therefore marked in a way the male *flâneur* is not—marked for pure presentness, criminality, availability and consumption. A search for the female *flâneur* and any subsequent definitions must take this into consideration. However, the literature offers a potentially genuine figure of the female *flâneur*, situated in a real space and enacting this new form of perceiving and being. This is the figure of the female spectator in the new *flâneuristic* spaces of the cinema, and the literature discusses women's real presence at the cinema, its indebtedness to *flânerie* and its emancipatory potential.

As extensive an attempt to understand and define *flânerie* seems to be, let alone the search for its female equivalent, this last point is an important one, which helps to approach the literature. If there is no female *flâneur* on the actual streets, scholars point to a potential referent in the spaces of the actual cinema, and this also justifies this paper's concentration on Junta and her viewing experience. Gleber explains that when we search for the female *flâneur* we must look to the spaces and practices of the cinema, for

Early cinema can be seen as one of the first public places in which this new freedom of the gaze was available to, and exercised by, women who had long been excluded from scopic pleasure [...] In the cinema's enclosed and privileged realms—spaces devoted to the activity of looking—female scopophilia finds one of its first headways (Gleber 186-7).

Junta exercises and fulfills her desire to look in the dark mountain grotto, and the result is so

real and so threatening that she is eventually eradicated as a viewing subject. However, her eternal existence as the one viewed combined with the female creation of this image offers multiple interpretations. For now it is important to acknowledge *flânerie*'s multiple meanings and applications associated with visuality and perception, its intimate connection to walking and streets, and its theoretical convergence with cinema and manifestation in female spectatorship. This is what runs through the literature one confronts. However, it is possible to assess a simpler, more accessible beginning of the *flâneur*. Where does a study of the figure and activity of the *flâneur* first take us in the literature? Gleber situates the discussion in Weimar modernity, and we can see two delineations regarding the study of *flânerie*: contemporary work on *flânerie* from the experiences of the first *flâneurs* (Baudelaire, Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin), as well as current work in visual, feminist and urban studies. The latter studies the literature of modernity and sociology, film theory, female scopophilia and the cinematic gaze. What is apparent is the multi-disciplined approach to this study. Although we start with the privileged looking enacted by early twentieth-century academics, their reaction to surface culture and the new public presence of women, what we end up with are current reflections on gendered viewing practices, women in the metropolis and film theory. The literature of *flânerie* encompasses all of this.

This paper should like to extend the study of *flânerie* and its association with the images of walking and looking past its urban genesis and original male practitioners to the specific example of female walkers and “bearers of the gaze,” specifically, to the walking and looking figure of Junta. As this paper addresses *flânerie* through the dialectics of self-definition and being in the modern world, it will understand the person of Riefenstahl herself and the character of Junta through the search for the female *flâneur* and its crystallization in the nexus of stardom. This paper will thus engage with the literature of modernity, Weimar

Germany, female spectatorship and feminist cultural theory.

The literature of *flânerie* emphasizes elements of space, the creation of subjectivity, and a critical sense of play. It is dominated by visuality, especially by a crisis in perception thus played out in this general psychoanalytic search for meaning and individuality in space, where space refers to any perceived site of modernity. As mentioned its definition is constantly in flux and characterized by tautology and mystery. The literature also negates the possibility of female *flânerie* under most of its guises: its agent must be male. The search for the female *flâneur* then does not simply search for the same figure, only dress-clad. Such an understanding of this figure is not possible, rather, a search for the female *flâneur* recognizes this ontological impossibility and leans into its reasons and consequences, while recognizing the continual willing and pleasurable female adoption of an inherently male-centric mode of visuality and being in the world in modernity. These females become spectators, actors and agents under this rubric and the literature in question seeks to understand this.

Thus, to study female *flânerie* is to negotiate ideas of space, subjectivity and critical play in addition to problems of female spectatorship, pleasure and meaning making. The literature emphasizes woman's particular relationship to modernity as resting on an experience of duality, adopting the subject position that requires their additional role as object: the "image-status" of female existence. Women in modernity are looking (subject), and being looked at (object). Therefore, we experience another element of elusiveness in addition to Tester's original frustration: if the *flâneur* himself is described in the literature as tautological and mysterious, the female *flâneur*'s existence as both subject and object of this elusive experience only multiplies the confusion. Gil discusses the tension involved in women's self-representation in modernity considering their troubled access to a subject position and the images provided for their use, explaining that

on a representational scale, woman became modernity's metaphor [...] as unfathomable as modernity itself. As a signifier disrupting the boundaries of signification [...] truly, the tautology of modernity applied to femininity as well (Gil 219).

This paper will attempt to understand this duality and extra-elusiveness and maintain its centrality to this discussion. The elusiveness inherent in woman's subjective creation and self-representation is understood as an affirmative one that successfully negotiates modernity's challenges to represent oneself visually and construct an identity in such a way. As mentioned, this paper maintains that Riefenstahl's figure of Junta illuminates this connection and provides a new interpretation of *Das blaue Licht*. Next, this section will discuss the application of a specifically urban phenomenon to a new modern terrain.

Mountain Flânerie

Theories of flânerie no longer emphasize a pure urban experience. For it *is* experience that qualifies flânerie if the appropriate flâneuristic variables are present. Frisby describes the theory of flânerie as the “intersection of thematic circles” comprising of roughly three elements or variable in an equation: figures in modernity, the reality and experience of modernity in time, and the products of such an interaction. For example: the figure of the flâneur (as gambler, adventurer, tourist, consumer) interacts with the “sites of modernity” (the metropolis, the mountainscape) through his quest for individuality and visuality. The intersection of this figure and these sites results in the loss of traditional meaning, restlessness, indifference, the development of fashionable taste and calculative qualities. This third element is that of the product: subjectivity and impressions created, contact made between subject and object, boundaries crossed and distances negotiated.

The sociological consequences of modernity thus reach past the metropolis, as

Simmel famously lamented the opening up of nature to metropolitan individuality in his short 1895 essay, “The Alpine Journey,” comparing the strivings and existence of the fervent alpine adventurer to any urban wanderer. Zygmunt Bauman likens the desert to the city, as far as the flâneur is concerned, as both represent heightened time-consciousness and unbounded spatiality: “what attracts the stranger to the city is what makes the city and the desert alike: in both there is just the present, united by the past, the present that may be lived as the beginning.” In the desert, as in the adventurous terrain of the mountains, “the stranger, the wanderer, the nomad, the flâneur finds *reprieve from time*,” (Bauman 140, italics original). Gumbrecht’s discussion of Weimar mountaineering emphasizes eroticism: just as the pull of cosmopolitan nightlife promises infinite winding darkness and erotic encounter, so does the prospect of alpine penetration and its confrontation with an infinitely-unknown space. (Gumbrecht, 136). The sociology of the metropolis and its peripatetic perception reaches to all leisure pursuits, this is now undeniable.

The fluidity presented by the previous discussions of thematic intersection allows us to replace such canonical intersections as the flâneur and the cityscape producing poetry or sociological texts. A new intersection proposed is that of the New Woman of modernity interacting with the scape and rocks of the mountains as a real site and experience of modernity. *Das blaue Licht* superficially depicts the modern tourist searching for adventure, authenticity and escape through its nostalgic portrayal of an idyllic mountain town. Junta is not a tourist, however, she is supposedly at home in the Tyrol mountains where she is inspired and fascinated by a mysterious blue light emanating periodically from a secret grotto of crystals. The poster advertisements and cover for the film do not show her looking and consuming the mountains, as the Weimar tourist does at the beginning of the film. Instead Junta gazes at the blue light that shines from within them. Her face is turned away from us,

her body motionless and curled upon a rock as the mysterious light shines upon her. Junta's viewing pleasure in the darkness of the crystal grotto is obviously a primary focus of the film and allows a comparison to the image of the female spectator in the cinema, her face similarly transfixed by the flickering of the screen's light and especially by the image from which it comes.

The tangents of moving and looking as topoi of this particular mountain film thus separate *Das blaue Licht* from the other films of the genre. It is a deceptively complex film about desire, consumption, and physical presence. The narrative is driven by problems surrounding the active gaze. Junta herself is fascinated with the act of looking at the crystals and the blue light. The town's fear and obsession arise from both the existence of the blue light, and Junta's own relationship with the light. Her consumption of the light and its resultant power are undeniably intertwined. Junta is also identified with the landscape, and the narrative role in which she partakes parallels that of the street film, where her narrative origins as femme fatale are more visible. She is identified with and is a part of the mountainscape, which this paper understands as one site of modernity. Thus, in addition to the themes of the Weimar male in crisis and the impact of tourism and national identity, mountain films are simply about moving and observing. What is significant is that at a time when women were only beginning to meaningfully emerge as figures occupying city streets, cinema screens, and mountain slopes, *Das blaue Licht* presents such a female figure inhabiting and walking alone in the mountains.



Figure 1: Leni Riefenstahl as Junta in Das blaue Licht (1932).

3 *Das blaue Licht* and the Crisis of Perception

This chapter will describe the provocation of Junta (and her gaze, Fig 1) in the film as well as how the specific context of Weimar informs through its perceived “crisis of perception.”

Tourism, Gender and Beyond

The mountain film is implicated in the history of tourism (from elite alpinism to mass movements), reform movements, and the excitement of the discovery of new sport and technology, connected through debates on modernity and modernization. Its involvement with tourism highlights Weimar's infatuation with the use of modern space: creating more of it, exploiting and consuming it, and of course determining who rightly belong where within it. The *Bergfilm's* connection with reform movements helps us look at how mountains and the body act as sites of resistance to certain kinds of modernization, while the undeniable mountain film fascination with new sport and technology introduce the omnipresent sense of contradiction and ambiguity inherent in discussions of modernity, and especially of modernity and woman. Mountains and woman are both modern and timeless, desired and feared, and a study of how these two elements are brought together in a film that, interpreted anew enacts Riefenstahl's “dance on the mountain,” in an “unconventional drama of the gaze,” (Hoff 43). The mountain film also enabled a simultaneous rejection and embracing of modern spaces, an expansion of tourism, new technologies that made filming in such locations possible, the Weimar spectator's desire for escape and adventure on screen, as well as gendered narrative constellations already familiar to such an audience.

Hake asks the reader to consider the reality of the intermediary position of Weimar

cinema, its position between the shock of war and the onset of totalitarianism. Canonical studies of the genre by Siegfried Kracauer and Lotte Eisner, which condemn elements of sentimental popular culture and fascism, deserve closer scrutiny. Hake believes recent currents in cultural and German studies force the admission that, “it is no longer possible to describe Weimar cinema as pre-fascist cinema without also considering the many characteristics that define it as a postwar cinema” (Hake *National Cinema* 30). Weimar culture does not represent a singular concept or movement, but is defined through its “underlying conflicts and contradictions,” which includes the mountain film's simultaneous rejection and embracing of modernity and modernization (Hake 27). Her discussion highlights the predictable tensions in Weimar between high art and popular culture, between the written and the visual, between romanticism and fascism, and the constant negotiation of the boundaries between the public and the private. The latter emphasizes the role of the Other in Weimar cinema, a tried and tested theme throughout discussions of modernity.

Hake's discussion of the mountain films free it from definite identification with fascism and other debates within German studies. She believes it, “occupies a much more precarious position between the celebration of archetypal landscapes and their enlistment in nationalist ideologies” and “must be described as a privileged expression of the dialectics of myth and modernity.” Such a privileged expression manifested itself in Riefenstahl's feature film, which Hake describes as a “highly symbolic mise-en-scène for the exceptional individual” (Hake 45). This emphasis on the exceptional individual and the tension between models and counter-models of modernity are important as we consider the nexus of the star.

Thus, mountains and tourism show us the first instances of women walking and looking on screen. While it is not unimportant to recognize the conflict inherent in expanding touristic practices and the need to represent them on film, why is there a

representational difference of gender in this modern landscape, and how can we understand what power the female gaze in these films really holds?

Eric Rentschler claim of the genre's "inherently gendered quality" (Rentschler "Mountains and Modernity" 160-1) enables us to reflect on how a woman created images of a woman both looking and being looked at. This gendered genre, utilizing images from fantastic and street films, is symbolically complex. Its portrayal of a scantily-clad woman climbing upon rocks, desiring light, tempting men and becoming a portrait must echo the sentiments of modernist thought and debate, which as mentioned, centre around the striving for individuality and its sociological consequences. The next section will look at the narrative of the film and the character of Junta, how it differs from others of its genre, will discuss various interpretations, and propose how we may interpret it anew.

The nostalgia inherent in the flâneur's search for the story behind the signs, his constant reading of the surface to see the past in the present, the ever-same in the always-new, reaches us through *Das blaue Licht's* status as a "myth of modernization." The film displays its Romantic debt through its use of the *Rahmenerzählung*, a story framed within a story, with this literary device also bespeaking the modern propensity to frame and consume. *Das blaue Licht* is neither a ski film nor a comedy. It is a myth about social change and woman's experience of it. Rentschler considers these elements, dubbing it a "highly instructive and quite complex film, indeed a meta-film" (Rentschler "Fatal Attractions" 50).

The film is thus exceptional in many aspects: it is distinct from others of its genre, introduces of new cinematic techniques, enjoyed popularity from both sides of the political spectrum, and a controversial nature as a result of its connection with Leni Riefenstahl. Scholars' discussions of the film mostly highlight its complex relationship with the dialectics of modernity, its interconnectedness to other Weimar genres, its fascist and photographic

indebtedness as seen through its images of the body. *Das blaue Licht* is not a documentary, but engages with the relationship between myth and modernity and the place of the individual within.

And as we search for woman's relationship to these last ideas, this paper stresses Hoff's claim that the film represents a "*mise-en-scène* for the exceptional individual," one obsessed with light and looking, performs a dance on the mountains which she penetrates, inhabits and with which she communes. This idea of the exceptional individual relates to the nexus of the star.

Historia della Junta: An Exceptional Individual

Das blaue Licht It is both a tale of modern tourism as well as a Romantic myth of modernization. There were three versions of the film released. The first version from 1932 begins with a modern Weimar tourist couple motoring in to a mountain village in the Tyrol mountains. At the inn their car stops and is immediately surrounded by young children selling little souvenirs which are the portrait of Junta that becomes that is the iconography of both the town, the film and Riefenstahl herself. The couple inquires about the image at the inn, asking, "who really is this Junta?" thus initiating the "*Historia della Junta*" which of course mirrors their own.

Vigo, a painter from Vienna, arrives at the mountain village and learns about the trouble with crystals, light and woman. The town's problem lays with Junta the wild *Naturkind* who lives alone in the mountains and has privileged access to a secret grotto of crystals that emanates a blue light during the full moon. The young men are of course attracted to both Junta and to the blue light and routinely fall to their deaths seeking both. Junta is thus both an object of the town's desire and derision, as the men lust after her rag-

clad body and the shiny crystals that accompany her. Vigo becomes obsessed with befriending Junta in order to help her. They cannot communicate (Junta speaks Italian) and he falls in love with her. He follows her to the secret grotto one night, surprises her and deems it a good idea to draw a map for the town in order to dispel the myth and make Junta an acceptable presence. The town proceeds to pillage the grotto, denuding it of its crystals and thus otherworldly appeal. As the town rejoices in its newfound wealth, Junta discovers the empty grotto, despairs and promptly falls to her death. Vigo finds her beautiful lifeless body, and her face in death becomes the famous gazing portrait (Fig 1).

Riefenstahl wanted to be seen as *the* creative force behind both the story and the film's technological innovations. While her use of new filming techniques allowing her to film nocturnal scenes during the day lent the film its mystical, gauzy quality is proof of her directorial talent, the story itself is traceable to other origins even though she claims it came from personal reveries and was intended to tell a personal story. As mentioned, *Das blaue Licht* uses familiar Germanic tropes, appealed to both the Right and the Left and went through three versions on account of the involvement of the popular Jewish screenwriter Béla Balázs. Balázs' influence accounts for the film's fairy-tale quality and emphasis on volkish culture, and his exclusion from mention in the 1938 release of the film is often used to implicate Riefenstahl in National Socialist collusion. The film was released acknowledging all those involved in 1932, reprised without the framing story in 1938 and re-released in 1952, which Rentschler mentions significantly spans three epochs of German film history.

Gustav Renker's 1930 novel *Bergkristall* also tells the story of an urban (male) painter searching for crystals and Heimat in the mountains. The blue light itself obviously represents romantic quests and mysticism, recalling Novalis' "blue flower" as well as one of Riefenstahl's earlier dance routines of the same name (Rentschler "Founding Myth" 155-6).

Hitler admired the film, but it was immensely popular in its own right. As Gertraud Steiner mentions, like most *Bergfilme* the film had to meet a certain “*Massengeschmack*” and was therefore understandably “*ideologiefällig*” (Steiner 263). Such mass appeal allows us to understand the film in the context of other Weimar genres as well as through the search for the female flâneur.

The film indeed depicts mountains, clouds, waterfalls and simple peasants working and dying, this much is true. But the impetus for the narrative of the film lies in the Weimar tourists' desire to know whom this Junta “really is” and why she is so famous. Junta as the climbing, looking and erotic figure is what drives the narrative of the film, not the worship of nature or the pursuit of ideology. This section will discuss this idea and seek to re-position it in the context of Weimar.

Narrative Media: The Women of Mountain- and Street Films

We have seen the mountain film described as a combination of the *Natur-* and *Spielfilm* (documentary and feature film). As the genre gained popularity its *Spielfilm* qualities became more important, and thus so did woman's role within them. Rentschler explains that, “women became a narrative medium, the source of conflict and disturbance, virtually competing with the mountains for men's affections and attentions,” (Rentschler “Modernity” 160). The mountain films became films about gender relations in modernity in which woman is cast in an “ever shifting phantasmagoric role, making her at times a force of nature, at others a modern medium, and on occasion both,” (161). Riefenstahl apparently recognized this inequality in the “generic economy” of these popular films, and wanted to create a film in which woman played a more prominent role than the mountains (157). The result of such a desire saw a narrative alignment of *Das blaue Licht* with other popular films

of the time that inevitably engage with Weimar's concern with the new presence of woman in the streets and on the screen; Rentschler specifically discusses its similarities to films of the fantastic and, most importantly for this study, the *Straßenfilm*. What his comparisons offer is a way to look at *Das blaue Licht* as a popular film that allowed a working-through of popular desires and anxieties about the creation of new spaces and gender relations within them, as well as a way to extract it from popular scholarly dismissals of the film based on its association with the controversial Riefenstahl.

We have established that *Das blaue Licht* is different. Its portrayal of myth and fairy-tale distinguishes it, as well as the cinematographic elements meant to convey such an atmosphere. The film sparkles, it is misty and cloudy and its uniquely filmed nocturnal scenes are captivating as we see the bright full moon, sparkling crystals, and mountain shadows as opposed to bright sun-lit snow peaks and jovial alpine frolicking. True to its name, the film constantly emanates a radiant blue light, which according to Balázs echoed, “the chilly draft from doomsday,” present in Murnau's *Nosferatu*. Rentschler explains that both films dramatize images attuned to primal emotions and unconscious desires and an “intelligence that seeks to render the inexplicable and unsettling in terms of human generality,” using the “stylized image of woman as a point of departure and focus of attention” (Rentschler “Founding Myth”157-8). The film's indebtedness to such vampiric, fantastic and romantic images of fetishized woman is part of a long literary and imagistic tradition, again reminding us of the mountain film's complex nature and refusal to be defined along purely nationalistic lines.² And from these fantastic literary shadows emerges the

² See especially the introduction to Elizabeth Bronfen's work, *Over her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*.

controversial yet predictable psychoanalytic “mover” of the narrative: the climbing, athletic “exceptional individual,” who inhabits the crevices of the mountain as her filmic counterparts inhabited other shadowy on-screen locales. Rentschler's subsequent identification of the mountain film with the *Straßenfilm* and its relationship to our first significant image of the consuming woman will be discussed.

In his further reevaluation of *Das blaue Licht* and attempt to associate the mountain genre more deeply with problems of gender and modernity, Rentschler introduces the comparison between the mountain film and the street film. His comparison is rooted in a closer look at the themes surrounding the Weimar debate about space and who uses it, and thus has further roots in the discussion of flânerie. Kracauer also discusses the street film in his famous analyses, guided by motifs of the confused male subject's encounter with modernization and woman, and the labyrinthine and shadowy relationships the modern subject enjoys with both. We are able to also see the mountain film in this light, as its narrative concessions to popular appeal created similar stories, characters and images. Rentschler clearly explains the mirrored comparison of these genres:

Streets, roving males and femmes fatales in the former correspond to the mountains, Alpine wanderers, and female intruders in the latter. The phantasmagoria of the big city [...] finds its generic counterpart in high-altitude epiphanies. The city, like the mountains, is a perplexing locus of fascination and peril. In its more fearful countenance, the metropolis becomes associated with female eroticism, just as the threatening aspect of nature relates to energies coextensive with female sexuality [...] The *Bergfilm*, in short, is the *Straßenfilm*'s double (Rentschler “Modernity” 151-2).

Rentschler's comparison not only serves to reposition the role of woman in the mountain film, in which he concludes that “female players figure keenly” and “above all, represent and embody a spirit potentially inimical to male images” (153). This comparison also illuminates many concepts surrounding the search for the female flâneur and justifies our

use of the mountain film in such a search. Many significant variables in this description allow us to see Junta, her environment and the men she encounters as part of a wider discourse on the use of public space and movement within it. The streets and modern capitalist manifestations of high rises and department stores are the mountain slopes, the men roam both places with similar fears and fascinations, and Junta is unmistakably our *femme fatale*, with all the connotations of commodity, seduction, and primordial confusion that is associated with such a figure.

One analysis may support this comparison. Joe May's film *Asphalt* (1929) details the tensions between environment, man, woman, and the commodity similar to the narrative in *Das blaue Licht*. This street film displays the chaotic movement and emotion of Weimar Berlin through the experience of the traffic cop seduced by a dark-haired jewel thief. The film is dark and filled with images of the distracting, electric commercialized streets of the *Großstadt* where woman constantly appear behind and in front of elaborate department store windows, displaying and lusting after stockings as the men in the crowd roll their eyes and exchange knowing glances of annoyance and disdain for such obviously passive feminine behaviour.

The *femme fatale* of these streets and the impetus for this narrative indeed complement that of Riefenstahl: Else is of similar energy, age and unnerving attraction and her primary problematic relationship in the film is also with a coveted sparkling object. The male police officer exists above the chaos of the streets in his managerial traffic position, while Else lives within them and negotiates them to her advantage. His seduction is understood as tragic and modern as we are to see him above the *mêlée* of the city's *Weltstadt-Rhythmus* of which woman and bought objects constitute the uncontrollable, dangerous parts. Else is dealt with and arrested in the end as the officer is extricated from his potential

downward urban spiral; her connection with the dangers of the city and of consumption results in her sacrifice and his emancipation. What this street film offers is a chance to see Junta as the conflicting desirous female who inhabits modern space on both sides of its capitalistic and rationalistic arrangements, threatening to overwhelm and challenge male subjectivity.

Provocation: Cultural Studies and Weimar Berlin

Studying the historical phenomenon and theoretical legacy of flânerie is to study Weimar Berlin, which Hake explains in her work on modern architecture and mass society. The proliferation of scholarship in German and cultural studies preoccupied with Weimar Berlin relates to the city's unique political and cultural place in the story of modernisation, industrialization and urbanization. Furthermore, these advancements were accompanied by a new urban subjective consciousness resulting in texts probing the changes and experiments on the surfaces of the growing city. Hake explains the deeply connected relationship between cultural studies and the idea of Weimar Berlin; the former seems indebted to the latter almost as powerfully and nostalgically as modern biology and Charles Darwin.

Scholars evoke Weimar Berlin as an “almost mythical place as a high point of classical modernity, a laboratory of modern mass culture,” and terms like *Weimar culture*, *urban culture*, *modern metropolis*, and *Weimar Berlin* become synonymous (Hake *Topographies* 5-7). Weimar Berlin's rapidly changing capital life, unique intellectual atmosphere and resulting theoretical consciousness made it a “privileged space” for thinking about tradition and change and, “for tracing their heterogeneous manifestations in social and spatial practices.” Hake describes that the “provocation of Weimar Berlin” is also undeniably tied to an “apolitical notion of subjectivity [...] which invariably means a

subjectivity in crisis” (Hake 5, 7). This paper embraces this notion of provocation: the phenomenon of Weimar Berlin provokes those who study modernity's images and legacies, and the figure of the flâneur exists as a tempting provocation for those seeking to understand the origins of self-conscious individuality rooted in such a seemingly simple activity.

This preoccupation with changing socio-spatial relations and a consciousness of subjective crisis therefore characterizes the literary products of the period, and as will be discussed predictably determines its cinematic obsessions as well. The flâneur and his writings cover the structural and psychological changes of city life accompanying the transformation of public space: from department stores, shop windows, advertising and transportation, to attitudes of indifference and longings for spiritualism and adventure. The literature represents studies of “surface culture” and the implications of modernity, and especially how these ideas both underlie and converge in the cinematic text. Weimar Berlin's (and thus the flâneur's) obsessions and problems with surface culture, and the resultant manifestations in cinema can be subsumed under the phrase “crisis of perception” that highlights two aspects of visuality important to this paper. This crisis is rooted in the perceived perceptual consequences of the prominence of looking as an activity in itself, and the accompanying acknowledgement that what was being looked at, the very currency of surface culture and the growing archive of modernity's metaphors, was the image of woman.

This latter realization dictated and continues to dictate writings on gender, especially in recent studies of women in the metropolis. As the theory of flânerie expanded to include a possible female participant the theories of looking, space, desire and subjectivity are to be “seen” through the lens of feminist cultural theory, especially feminist film theory. Walters explains that feminist cultural theory recognizes that modern society is dominated by the spectacle, and that this spectacle is more often than not the image of woman. It then asks

how the image is constructed and how it is male-dominated (the mechanisms of viewing), and recognizes the power inherent in looking. Feminist cultural theory and film studies ask how a female spectator is possible in such a gendered viewing tradition. Many scholars focus on this viewing tradition, and seek to understand how the gaze of the camera continued other male-dominated discourses and viewing traditions in modernity. Work in the area of female spectatorship focuses on the nexus of the star, and seeks to understand how this phenomenon and female subjectivity in modernity interact. These areas of scholarship will help illuminate and clarify the enigma of flânerie, as well as add to the proliferation of “surface” analysis in our chosen area of study, that of Weimar Berlin.

The search for the female flâneur introduces theories of modernity, gender, film, and actual streetwalking. As the literature emphasizes the transformation of private to public life that the flâneur himself confronts, the nexus of the star presents the same transformation, but instead allows an affirmative position in regards to such a transformation. The specific example of Riefenstahl's work allows a narrower focus on certain instances of the crisis of perception and surface culture in Germany near the end of the Weimar Republic, as well as a way to understand the film through feminist cultural theory.

The Crisis of Perception

This paper maintains that *Das blaue Licht* is an exceptional mountain film compared to others of its genre, addressing the body, gender and the gaze. Although believe Riefenstahl's film does indeed provides this alternative reading, understanding its place in the context of the Weimar obsession with perception perspective, serves as an appropriate starting point with which to introduce the literature surrounding this study. The film indeed tells a story of the problems of vision, desire and the gaze, but it *is* a story that Weimar film

tells again and again. This section will explore the literature surrounding the discussion of the particularly Weimar “foregrounding of vision” as a backdrop.

This foregrounding motivates the narrative of many films, as we can plainly see with the case of *Das blaue Licht*. It is indeed a story of visuality and its consequences. The tourists come to see the town and the mountains, are confronted with the image of Junta, the story of Junta herself describes her pleasure in viewing the crystals and the light as well as the town's pleasure in viewing her. The film repeatedly depicts a subject gazing at an object: the crystals, the mountain, the light, or the image of woman.

According to Thomas Elsaesser to study “the Weimar cinema” is to study visual pleasure.³ Elsaesser contextualizes and challenges canonical commentary on well-known Weimar film, such as those by Siegfried Kracauer and Lotte Eisner and the consequent questions of auteur and genre film. In addition to tackling the “question of cinema” itself he addresses the omnipresent question of how Weimar film and being German interact. Thus, Elsaesser presents the questions of cinema in the context of an historical “crisis of perception,” and addresses the relationship between cinema, history and history’s spectators. The questions of cinema address notions of spectatorship and *Schaulust* (visual pleasure), narrative, sexual difference and representation, the possibility of female pleasure in cinema, and the historical nature of spectatorship (Elsaesser 52-3). It is important to simply ask why cinema is and what it does: why do we watch film? Why do we enjoy watching film? Which images appear and recur on film, and in which way? These questions are answered by psychoanalytic discussions of desire: we watch because we find pleasure in doing so, we desire to satisfy our *Schaulust*.

3 Elsaesser, “Film History and Visual Pleasure,” in *Cinema Histories, Cinema Practices*.

The cinema is still a new visual apparatus in Weimar, and the questions it poses reflect the changing relationship of visibility and public life comprising the larger discussions of subjectivity in modernity. The flâneur as the “pivotal figure of modernity” represents a disposition that is closely affiliated with the gaze of the camera (Gleber 6). For now, we can say that both the flâneur as subject and the particular *modus operandi* of the cinema share similar techniques of observation, and according to Elsaesser, a similar state of perceptual crisis. This “crisis of perception” that occupies early theorists of modernity such as Georg Simmer, Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin influences subsequent studies of modernity. This crisis refers to sociological changes that forced new visual relationships upon the modern subject, including capitalism, industrialisation, and changes in transportation. It also highlights the problem of distance and spatiality encountered in many texts, which will be shown to be the perceptual world of the flâneur and the writings of one of the first sociologists to ponder this crisis.

Simmel was the first to attempt to analyze this crisis and place it within academic study. His canonical 1903 essay “*Die Großstadt und das Geistesleben*” (The Metropolis and Mental Life), and his large body of impressionistic essays initiated a new study into the inner meaning of specifically modern life and its products. Simmel studies the *Großstadt* as a new site of modernity, using its existential basis in ever changing, new spatiality and rapid change in society to explore space and sociality in modernity, especially “the social psychological impact of socio-spatial relations” (Frisby *Cityscapes* 11). Simmel seeks to understand how the growing money economy, the changing relationship of man to labour, and rapid industrialization and massification in cities formerly dominated by regality, community and tradition affects the individual's mental life, his relationship with others, and his quest for individuality in the face of an overabundance of objective culture, the “super-individual

contents of life.” These changes and their trials make the modern city a site of constantly moving, impersonal structures characterized by fleeting impressions, the dominance of fashion, circularity and strangeness. This over-stimulation results in a conscious intellectualization, a tendency to defensively develop a “highly personal subjectivity ” and a blasé attitude. New and strange things become too close, beloved forms too far. The new and unpredictable rate at which the too close becomes the too far, this constant circularity of the confrontation with strangeness and the sudden disappearance of tradition, affects a crucial loss of meaning for the subject in modernity. Constant change dictated by capitalism and fashion and man's perceptual alteration resulting from advances in public transportation and new viewing technologies create an environment meant to be seen and evaluated. This overall transformation of private to public life thus enforced looking itself as an activity. Looking as a way to evaluate newness, strangeness, the temptations and symbolisms of space—but most of all, looking as fulfillment of desire. This leads Elsaesser to describe Weimar film through its preoccupation with the “*mise-en-scène* of the look” which foregrounds vision as a condition of experience and identification:

What is clear is that Weimar cinema posits the question of the relationship of visual pleasure and narrative cinema [...] visual pleasure appears inseparable from anxiety and is inscribed in a network of power and loss of power [...] What is perhaps the distinguishing feature of the Weimar cinema [is] its valorization of vision and the look evidenced in its emphasis on the act of seeing and being seen (Elsaesser 73).

The perceptual crisis and foregrounding of vision is also twofold, encompassing the anxiety provoked by changes in the urban environment, as well as the acknowledgement of the problematic nature of female spectatorship: how is the new female spectator of Weimar cinema afforded pleasure? Thus, this discussion acknowledges the spectacular excess characterizing Weimar cinema.

This paper will now discuss the example of Junta in the context of “spectacularity,” relate it to the religious experience of the nexus of the star and answer Conor's question of the presence of an empowering experience in an existence as an image-object.

4 Conclusion: Spectacular Subjects and Self-Desire

“What is there left to say about Leni Riefenstahl in this period—postwar, post-Wall, post-Sontag, post-Riefenstahl?” is the question asked in a recent anthology of scholarship (*Riefenstahl Screened* 1). This paper has argued that there is much to say about “understanding female subjectivity” in *Das blaue Licht* through the framework of female flânerie: about visibility, appearing and the gaze. This film demonstrates the explosive power of the gaze, our discomfort with individuality, and the persistence of religious and confessional thought in the modern era, especially in the “nexus of the star.”

Conor ends her work with a question for the reader: “how might women be spectacular subjects?” She believes appearing as spectacle and image-object is an empowering modern experience, but as mentioned, she fails to offer the reason why. This paper believes a further answer can be constructed in the religious aspects inherent in the “nexus of the star” this paper has attempted to describe through Riefenstahl’s film, informed through female flânerie and the “modern appearing woman” who was a subject position produced through scopophilic encounters in which social meaning and power relations were increasingly fused with industrialized image production and the regulation of the flow of looks in public space” (Conor 35).

Walters offers the contemporary pop-culture example of the divisive discussions surrounding Madonna, an appropriate consideration here. Madonna and Riefenstahl are not dissimilar: both demonstrate aggressive attempts to define themselves completely in the eyes of the public world and use male-determined imagery and concepts to do so, all the while severely aggravating feminists. A study of both Madonna and Junta reckon with the “complicated and contradictory nature of images in our culture.” She explains that “the

ambiguity of Madonna's self-representation (is she putting us on? Is she mocking the male gaze or wilfully giving in to it? Is she whore or madonna or both, or neither?) points to the already over-determined status of representing woman in popular culture” (Walters 20). Both Madonna and Junta provoke women and men with their gazes: they can entice and repel and certainly also resist interpretation.

The element of provocation is present in many aspects of this study: the flâneur is provoked to wander the streets by his own hunger for visuality and experience (*Erfahrungshunger*), and Riefenstahl's disconcerting business of making herself a star at all costs and her position in German history have provoked decades of scholarship that question the relationship between celebrity, fascism and religion. Weimar Berlin as an object of study provokes those interested in cultural studies and modernity. And for the specific purposes of this analysis, this paper asserts the provocation of Riefenstahl's own gaze as Junta (Fig 1) and the significance of the first returned female gazes on the real streets of modernity—prostitutes appear and their gazes provoke. However, as mentioned both notions of provocation and stimuli, the territory of the gaze and the flâneur and thealso involve desire. What do I desire?

Confession

“I see myself in pictures,” is the desire and enforced reality of Irmgard Keun's Weimar protagonist as she narrates her own urban confession. Feminist scholars (after Mulvey) say women must see themselves on cinema's screen and are forced by the nature of their own gender to desire their own images and themselves. To begin to see oneself in pictures is the reality of Modern Woman newly allowed a subjectivity through visuality and expected self-display. Women begin also to write about other women and this also takes the

form of a confession, as seen through the work of Conor and Bruno. Riefenstahl as a character in the story of woman's history allows identification as a figure of modern dance, a businesswoman of film, a suffering artist, and object of sexual desire. She also confesses her life story as a succession of images, but mostly as a story of how much desire she has for herself: Leni needs only to satisfy the needs of her art and her destiny through forms, stills, photographs—images. This self-desire found so unsettling in Riefenstahl is the necessary activity of the modern female subject: the task of discovering and thus *confessing* one's subjectivity through imagery and visibility. The price of complete agency and knowledge of oneself (through appearing and imagery) is an experience of repentance and transformation ending with complete dissolution into the public collective as a stock hagiographic figure (Fig 1).

One scholar's search highlights this: Conor admits she “took pleasure” in her looks (Conor xv). But the subject she created through these techniques of appearing and practices of visibility is consequently a critical, reflective one conscious of the ambivalent nature of the spectacle she has created and left questioning the truth of her self-representation: Conor indeed confesses her subjectivity. In order to complete the narrative of this subjectivity, the author must reveal her imagined past and contemplate the questions and lessons of these self-desires: *what does it mean to see yourself in images?* A possible answer would be the meaning found in the self-infantilized religious narrative of the nexus of the star, which this paper has argued is seen through Junta and informed by the experience of female *flânerie*. This narrative is neither modern nor secular, and Turner explains that it is embodied by our search for and discomfort with the “familiar stranger” (not unlike the solitary figure of the *flâneur*), who

is by no means unprecedented in history. People have long imagined a world

populated by figures who were not physically at hand and yet seemed somehow present. What has changed, of course, is the magnitude of the flow, the range of characters that enter our world, their omnipresence, the sheer number of stories. Inevitably, today's stories are but prologues or sequels to other stories, true and less true stories, stories that are themselves intermissions, stories without end (Turner 22).

Conor's "spectacular" Modern Woman continues such a story. What is the answer then to the lingering question scholars ask of this figure: how is appearing modern (through the nexus of the star) an empowering subject position for women? Through the connections made here between female *flânerie* and Riefenstahl's imagery, this paper suggests that the nexus of the star as a spectacular subject position is empowering through its transformative and confessional powers—its *religiosity*. Furthermore, its power is sensed through the sociological discomfort inherent in the business of an exceptional individual seeing and desiring only herself. The provocations described through this study and the suggested relationship between the nature of modern female subjectivity and a confessional religiosity will hopefully provoke further work in German Cultural Studies and Feminist Cultural Studies.

Bibliography

- Ankum, Katharina von. "Material Girls: Consumer Culture and the 'New Woman' in Anita Loos' *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and Irmgard Keun's *Das kunstseidene Mädchen*." *Colloquia Germanica: Internationale Zeitschrift für Germanistik* 27.2 (1994): 159-72. Print.
- . *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1997. Print.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. "Desert spectacular." *The Flâneur*. Ed. Keith Tester. London: Routledge, 1994. 138-158. Print.
- Bean, Jennifer M. "Technologies of Early Stardom and the Extraordinary Body." *Camera Obscura* 16.3 (2001): 8-57. Print.
- Bell, Daniel. *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. New York: Basic Books, 1976. Print.
- Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London, England ; New York: Penguin, 2008; 1972. Print. Modern Classics .
- Bronfen, Elisabeth. *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1992. Print.
- Bruno, Giuliana. *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993. Print.
- Buci-Glucksmann, Christine. "Catastrophic Utopia: The Feminine as Allegory of the Modern." *Representations: The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth century* 14 (1986): 220-229. Print.
- Confino, Alon. "Consumer Culture is in Need of Attention: German Cultural Studies and the Commercialization of the Past." *A User's Guide to German Cultural Studies*. Eds. Scott Denham, Irene Kacandes, and Jonathan Petropoulos. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997. 181-188. Print.
- Conor, Liz. *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004. Print.
- Cowan, Michael. "The Heart Machine: 'Rhythm' and Body in Weimar Film and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*." *Modernism/modernity* 14.2 (2007): 225-248. Print.
- . *Cult of the Will: Nervousness and German Modernity*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008. Print.

- Crew, David F. "Who's Afraid of Cultural Studies? Taking a 'Cultural Turn' in German History." *A User's Guide to German Cultural Studies*. Eds. Scott Denham, Irene Kacandes, and Jonathan Petropoulos. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997. 45-61. Print.
- Das blaue Licht*. Dir. Leni Riefenstahl. Perf. Leni Riefenstahl, Mathias Wieman. Prod. Leni Riefenstahl, Harry R. Sokal. Aafa Films, 1932. Film.
- Dassanowsky, Robert von. "A Mountain of a Ship: Locating the *Bergfilm* in James Cameron's *Titanic*." *Cinema Journal* 40 (2001): 18-35. Print.
- Doane, Mary Ann. "The Close-Up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema." *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 14.3 (2003): 89-111. Print.
- . "Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator." *Screen* 23 (1982): 74-88. Print.
- Eliášová, Véra. "Women in the City: Female Flânerie and the Modern Urban Imagination." Doctor of Philosophy Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, 2009. Print.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. "Film History and Visual Pleasure: Weimar Cinema." *Cinema Histories, Cinema Practices*. 4 Vol. Eds. Patricia Mellencamp and Philip Rosen. Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1984. 47-87. Print.
- Featherstone, Mike. "Georg Simmel: An Introduction." *Theory Culture Society* 8 (1991): 1-16. Print.
- Felski, Rita. *The Gender of Modernity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995. Print.
- Fleischer, Molly. "The Gaze of the Flâneur in Siegfried Kracauer's 'Das Ornament Der Masse'." *German Life and Letters* 54.1 (2001): 10-24. Print.
- Friedberg, Anne. *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. Print.
- Frisby, David. "The Aesthetics of Modern Life: Simmel's Interpretation." *Theory Culture Society* 8 (1991): 73-93. Print.
- . *Cityscapes of Modernity: Critical Explorations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 2001. Print.
- . *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985. Print.

- ., and Mike Featherstone. *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 1997. Print.
- Fritzsche, Peter. *Reading Berlin 1900*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996. Print.
- Gabler, Neal. *Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality*. New York: Knopf, 1998. Print.
- Ganeva, Mila. *Women in Weimar Fashion: Discourses and Displays in German Culture, 1918-1933*. Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2008. Print.
- Garncarz, Joseph. "The Star System in Weimar Cinema." *The Many Faces of Weimar Cinema: Rediscovering Germany's Filmic Legacy*. Ed. Christian Rogowski. Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2010. Print.
- Gay, Peter. *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider*. 1st ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1968. Print.
- Gil, Isabel Capeloa. "'Jede Frau ist eine Tänzerin...': The Gender of Dance in Weimar Culture." *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic*. Ed. Christiane Schönfeld. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006. 218-242. Print.
- Gleber, Anke. *The Art of Taking a Walk: Flanerie, Literature, and Film in Weimar Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999. Print.
- Gledhill, Christine. *Stardom: Industry of Desire*. London: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. *In 1926: Living at the Edge of Time*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997. Print.
- Hake, Sabine. *German National Cinema*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.
- . "Girls and Crisis-the Other Side of Diversion." *New German Critique: An Interdisciplinary Journal of German Studies* 40 (1987): 147-64. Print.
- . *Topographies of Class: Modern Architecture and Mass Society in Weimar Berlin*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008. Print.
- Holt, Lee Wallace. "Mountain, Mountaineering and Modernity: A Cultural History of German and Austrian Mountaineering, 1900-1945." Doctor of Philosophy The University of Texas at Austin, 2008. Print.
- Hoff, Dagmar von, "From Dance to Film: The Cinematic Art of Leni Riefenstahl and Dorothy Arzner." *Visual Culture in Twentieth-Century Germany: Text as Spectacle*. Ed. Gail Finney. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2006. 41-51. Print.

- Huysen, Andreas, and David Bathrick. *Modernity and the Text: Revisions of German Modernism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989. Print.
- Jensen, Erik Norman. *Body by Weimar: Athletes, Gender, and German Modernity*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Print.
- Kaes, Anton, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. 3 Vol. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994. Print.
- Keun, Irmgard, Stefanie Arend, and Ariane Martin. *Das kunstseidene Mädchen : Roman*. Berlin: Claassen, 2005. Print.
- Keun, Irmgard, and Katharina von Ankum. *The Artificial Silk Girl*. New York: Other Press, 2002. Print.
- Kim, David D. *Georg Simmel in Translation: Interdisciplinary Border-Crossings in Culture and Modernity*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006. Print.
- Koshar, Rudy. *German Travel Cultures*. Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2000. Print.
- Kracauer, Siegfried, and Thomas Y. Levin. "Cult of Distraction: On Berlin's Picture Palaces." *New German Critique: An Interdisciplinary Journal of German Studies* 40 (1987): 91-6. Print.
- . *The Mass Ornament : Weimar Essays*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995. Print.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. *Theory of Film; the Redemption of Physical Reality*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1960. Print.
- Lasch, Christopher. *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. New York: W.W Norton & Company, Inc., 1979. Print.
- Lensing, Leo A. "Cinema, Society, and Literature in Irmgard Keun's *Das kunstseidene Mädchen*." *The Germanic Review* 60.4 (1985): 129-34. Print.
- McCarthy, Margaret. "Surface Sheen and Charged Bodies: Louise Brooks as Lulu in *Pandora's Box* (1929)." *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide to Classic Films of the Era*. Ed. Isenberg, Noah William Isenberg. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. 217-237. Print.
- Meskimmon, Marsha. *We Weren't Modern enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*. 25 Vol. Berkeley: University of California Press: I.B. Tauris, 1999. Print.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *The Audience Studies Reader*. Ed. Deborah Jermyn. London, England: Routledge, 2003. 133-142. Print.

- Nenno, Nancy P. "'Postcards from the Edge': Education to Tourism in the German Mountain Film." *Light Motives: German Popular Film in Perspective*. Eds. Randall Halle and Margaret McCarthy. Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 2003. Print.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Untimely Meditations (Thoughts Out of Season Parts I and II)*. Trans. Ludovici, Anthony M. and Adrian Collins. Ed. Oscar Levy. Digireads.com Publishing: A Digireads.com Book, 2009. Print.
- Pages, Neil Christian, Mary Rhiel and Ingeborg Majer O'Sickey, eds. *Riefenstahl Screened: An Anthology of New Criticism*. New York: Continuum, 2008. Print.
- Penley, Constance. *Feminism and Film Theory*. New York; London, Eng.: Routledge; Bfi, 1988. Print.
- Petro, Patrice. *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar, Germany*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989. Print.
- . "Modernity and Mass Culture in Weimar: Contours of a Discourse on Sexuality in Early Theories of Perception and Representation." *New German Critique* 40 (1987): 115-146. Print.
- . "Perceptions of Difference: Woman as Spectator and Spectacle." *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*. Ed. Katharina von Ankum. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1997. 41-66. Print.
- Peucker, Brigitte. "The Fascist Choreography: Riefenstahl's Tableaux." *Modernism/modernity* 11.2 (2004): 279-297. Print.
- Pile, Steve, and Nigel Thrift. *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation*. New York: Routledge, 1995. Print.
- Rentschler, Eric. "Fatal Attractions: Leni Riefenstahl's 'The Blue Light'." *October* 48 (1989): 46-88. Print.
- . "Mountains and Modernity: Relocating the *Bergfilm*." *New German Critique* 51 (1990): 137-161. Print.
- Riefenstahl, Leni. *The Sieve of Time: The Memoirs of Leni Riefenstahl*. London, Eng.: Quartet Books, 1992. Print.
- Rinke, Stefanie. "Körper und Medien des Traumas bei Emmy Hennings und Irmgard Keun." *Stadt Und Trauma: Annäherungen--Konzepte--Analysen*. Eds. Fraisl, Bettina and Monika Stromberger. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann. 281-297. Print.

- Mädchen in Uniform*. Dir. Leontine Sagan. Prod. Carl Froelich. Perf. Hertha Thiele, Dorothea Wieck. Deutsche Film Gemeinschaft/Bild und Ton GmbH, 1931. Film.
- Schulte-Sasse, Linda. "Leni Riefenstahl's Feature Films and the Question of a Fascist Aesthetic." *Cultural Critique* 18 (1991): 123-148. Print.
- Simmel, Georg. "The Alpine Journey." *Theory Culture Society* 8 (1991): 95-98. Print.
- Smart, Barry. "Digesting the modern diet: Gastro-Porn, fast food and panic eating." Ed. Keith Tester. *The Flâneur*. London: Routledge, 1994. 158-181. Print.
- Solnit, Rebecca. *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. New ed. London: Verso, 2002. Print.
- Steiner, Gertraud. "Vom Bergfilm zum neuen Heimatfilm: wie Ideologisch ist der Heimatfilm?" *Modern Australian Literature* 30 (1997): 253-264. Print.
- Stutterheim, Kerstin. "Die Landschaft als Charakter--der Charakter der Landschaft im Film." *Tourismus Journal* 8 (2004): 281-294. Print.
- Tegel, Susan. "Béla Balázs: Fairytales, Film and *The Blue Light*." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 24.3 (2004): 497-502. Print.
- Tester, Keith. *The Flâneur*. London: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Thurner, Manuela Andrea. "Girllkultur and Kulturfeminismus: Gender and Americanism in Weimar Germany, 1918-1933." *Dissertation Abstracts International, Section A: The Humanities and Social Sciences* 61.1 (2000): 236-. Print.
- Turner, Graeme. *Understanding Celebrity*. London: Sage Publication, 2004. Print.
- Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze*. 2nd ed. London; Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2002. Print.
- Vucht Tijssen, Lieteke von. "Women and Objective Culture: George Simmel and Marianne Weber." *Theory Culture Society* 8 (1991): 203-218. Print.
- Wager, Jans B. *Dangerous Dames: Women and Representation in the Weimar Street Film and Film Noir*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999. Print.
- Walters, Suzanna Danuta. *Material Girls: Making Sense of Feminist Cultural Theory*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. Print.
- Wanderer, Jules J. "Simmel's Forms of Experiencing: The Adventure as Symbolic Work." *Symbolic Interaction* 10.1 (1987): 21-28. Print.
- Ward, Janet. *Weimar Surfaces : Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany*. 27 Vol. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. Print.

- Werth, Margaret. "Modernity and the Face." *Intermediality: History and Theory of the Arts, Literature and Technologies* 8 (2006): 83-102. Print.
- Williams, Linda. *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995. Print. Rutgers Depth of Field Series.
- Williamson, George S. *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004. Print.
- Witz, Anne. "Georg Simmel and the Masculinity of Modernity." *Journal of Classical Sociology* 1 (2001): 353-370. Print.
- Wolff, Janet. "The Feminine in Modern Art: Benjamin, Simmel and the Gender of Modernity." *Theory Culture Society* 17.33-53 (2000). Print.
- . "The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity." *Theory Culture Society* 2.37 (1985): 37-46. Print.