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**Postfeminism in Action:
Female Cosmopolitan Subjects in Doug Liman's *The Bourne Identity*
and Jaume Collet-Serra's *Unknown***

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Abstract

This BA paper analyses two popular contemporary Hollywood action films, specifically Doug Liman's *The Bourne Identity* (2002) and Jaume Collet-Serra's *Unknown* (2011). The focus of the BA paper is on the representation of travelling female subjects. The first part of the analysis will reflect on the representation of women in the light of Rosalind Gill's conception of the notion of postfeminism. Ana Moya's ideas on cosmopolitan female subjects in Hollywood cinema will be used in the second part of the analysis. The analyses reveal that action as a genre, breaks from typical conventions, which represent female characters mainly as tourists. The contemporary action films portray a dual nature of female empowerment. On one hand, travelling female subjects in action are represented as strong and independent women, but on the other hand, the main female protagonists in both movies give up their true identities and settle down with the male protagonists.

1. Introduction

Every cultural phenomenon is a response to important historical events. World War II and the fear of the nuclear weapons, military powers, and conspiracies, led to the political espionage among countries, which fueled the fascination with spy stories, represented in literature and film (Cawelti and Rosenberg 1987: 1-3). As a British product, action became most popular in the 1960s with the rise of James Bond, though, later, it shifted to Hollywood (Briandana 2013: 184). *The Bourne* franchise consists of three movies, dated 2002, 2004, 2007. The first movie, which is going to be analysed was directed by Doug Liman, the following movies that are not a part of this analysis were directed by Paul Greengrass. The three movies are considered to be one of the most famous Hollywood franchises (Tasker 2015: 166). Another movie, which is in the focus of this BA paper, was directed by Jaume Collet-Serra and is called *Unknown* (2011). In 2011, the film was nominated for Audience Award at the ceremony of European Film Awards. Film critic, the winner of Pulitzer Prize, Roger Ebert, described it as ‘(...) a skillfully photographed and acted film, and few actors are better than Liam Neeson at playing a man who has had the rug pulled out from under him’ (Ebert 2011).

Action films are generally deemed to be predominantly male oriented, however, the role of women in them has been a point of scholarly discussion. Action films, specifically the subgenre of espionage/spy films¹, focused on in this paper, usually follow a number of conventions. The notion of the action film is problematic because the genre falls into several subgenres, which are, for instance ‘martial arts action’, ‘suspense action’, ‘espionage/spy action’ etc., although most of them follow certain conventions that are typical to all action films (Briandana 2013: 184). Espionage/spy films often deal with the identity of the hero and explore how trustworthy the people surrounding him or her are (Tasker 2015: 166). Women stepped into the genre in the 1970s, which was the start of the representation of women as being capable of violence and doing the same things that men did (Schubart 2007: 12). Before this shift, women were mostly represented as love interests or trophies (*Ibid.*). Also, in the majority of the films, the action hero is a man (Briandana 2013: 184). In those action movies where women are not the heroes, they tend to be represented as the companions to the male hero. Generally, the female character is the product of a male writer, a

¹ Spy story, a tale of international intrigue and adventure (*Britannica* 2022).

male director and a male producer (Schubart 2007: 16), which is indicative of the fact that female characters will most likely be represented as objects of male-gaze² or male desires.

Hollywood action films reflect the fact that we live in the age of mass tourism, travelling constituting an important part of these films. In many American and European films that have to do with women who travel, they tend to be portrayed as tourists (Gwynne and Muller 2013: 14). These women are usually heterosexual, white and middle-class women who can completely reinvent their lives by travelling (*Ibid.* p. 14-16). For instance, Ryan Murphy's *Eat Pray Love* (2010), where Liz (played by Julia Roberts) travels to Europe and Asia to rediscover herself (*Ibid.* p. 17). This BA paper aims to investigate how action films depart from this convention of representing females as tourists.

The two films that were chosen for this analysis are contemporary Hollywood movies: Doug Liman's *The Bourne Identity* (2002) and Jaume Collet-Serra's *Unknown* (2011). The two movies belong to the genre of spy/espionage films and explore the same topic of memory loss and fractured identities. The main characters in these two movies are Jason Bourne (Matt Damon) and Martin Harris (Liam Neeson) who share very similar fates. The focus of this analysis, however, is going to be on the female characters who play prominent roles in the two films.

The main female characters in *The Bourne Identity* are Marie (Franka Potente), who becomes an ally of the main character Jason Bourne, and Nicolette 'Nicky' (Julia Stiles), who is an employee at Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) secret Treadstone program. The main women characters in *Unknown* are Gina (Diana Kruger), a Bosnian immigrant, who joins the hero and helps him to figure out the secret of his stolen identity, and Elizabeth Harris 'Liz' (January Jones), who is the alleged wife of the main character and his colleague assassin. The two movies are 9 years apart, therefore, it will be interesting to see whether there have been significant shifts in the way women are represented.

Doug Liman (b. 1965), the director of *The Bourne identity*, is an American filmmaker. The director has a degree in history, but he also studied film at University of Southern California's film school,

² 'A manner of treating women's bodies as objects to be surveyed, which is associated by feminists with hegemonic masculinity, both in everyday social interaction and in relation to their representation in visual media.' (*Oxford Reference* 2022)

where he discovered his passion for action movies. Other famous films directed by him include *Swingers* (1996), *Go* (1999) and *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* (2005). *The Bourne identity* is based on Robert Ludlum's novel by the same name, written in 1980. The movie received positive criticism because of the empathetic nature of its characters. Film critic Manhola Dargis writes ‘(...) it’s unexpectedly affecting when the woman he’s with vomits after she sees another man violently die’ (Dargis 2005).

The film starts with fishermen finding an unidentified man’s body floating in the sea. The captain of the ship performs a surgery on the man and takes out several bullets alongside with a device that contains a code, which unlocks the safe deposit box located in Zürich, Switzerland. When the man regains consciousness, he cannot remember who he is. He goes to the bank in Switzerland and figures out that he is Jason Bourne. After his bank visit, the head of the CIA’s Treadstone program, Conklin, orders police to catch him. One of the most important women, Marie, steps into the narrative, when Bourne, hunted by the police, offers her money to drive him to his apartment in Paris. Their relationship evolves as ‘Unknown to himself, Bourne requires the assistance of an ordinary civilian, Marie, in order to elude and then confront the forces of the CIA’ (Tasker 2015: 170).

The film was a huge success because its style differs from a typical action movie (*Ibid.* p. 168). The hero of the story is not concerned with society’s well-being, he has personal issues, such as rediscovering his real identity (Firmansyah 2017: 32). The empathetic nature of the characters is also represented through Bourne’s relationship with Marie and his romantic feelings towards her (Tasker 2015: 172). Some critics evaluate Marie’s presence as not serving any greater purpose in the movie, only being there because there had to be a female character alongside the hero. R. Ebert writes ‘And we catch on (sooner than Marie) that the girl stays in the picture only because—well, there has to be a girl, to provide false suspense and give the loner hero someone to talk to’ (Ebert 2002). R. Schubart writes about the heroine³/woman in action and states that ‘(...) she is always at his command, at his feet and at his service’ (1998: 213). As the subsequent analysis reveal, it is not necessarily an accurate statement.

³ ‘A woman who is admired for having done something very brave or having achieved something great; the main female character in a book or film, who is usually good’ (*Cambridge Dictionary* 2022).

The second film that is going to be analysed in this BA paper is a 2011 espionage/spy movie *Unknown*, directed by Jaume Collet-Serra (b.1974). The director moved to the United States at the age of 18 and studied at Colombia College. His career began when the music video he shot was recognized by a couple of production companies. Unlike Doug Liman, Jaume Collet-Serra began his career shooting commercials for brands such as PlayStation, Renault, and many others. Some of the famous movies that he has directed include horror movies *House of Wax* (2005) and *Orphan* (2009). *Unknown* became a box office number-one⁴ film on the opening weekend.

At the beginning of the movie Martin Harris and his wife Liz arrives at a biotechnology conference in Berlin, where Harris gets involved in a car accident. The driver, Bosnian immigrant Gina saves him but runs away and Harris wakes up in hospital. After getting back to the hotel, he discovers that his identity has been stolen, his wife has another husband, who is *the real* Martin Harris and she does not recognize her former husband. He tries to prove his identity to the police but ends up passing out and once again waking up in hospital. After an unsuccessful attempt on his life by an assassin, Harris escapes from the hospital and finds Gina, who helps him solve the mystery of his stolen identity.

As film critic M. Dargis observes, ‘(...) Who am I? That same existential cry fuels the first “Bourne” movie (2002), which “Unknown” apes in large and small ways, from its international setting to its friendly, tag-along Euro-chick; conspiratorial web; and paranoia’ (Dargis 2011). The critic suggests that *Unknown* seems to be copying *The Bourne Identity* by having it's setting in a European country and Gina's presence being a ‘tag-along’. Another movie critic Jeanette Catsoulis describes female characters in the movie by specifying that they are ‘(...) helpful females — a sympathetic nurse (Eva Löbau), a spunky Bosnian illegal (Diane Kruger)’ (Catsoulis 2011), which suggests that the representation of women in the film is superficial.

The previous analyses of both films focus on the theme of memory loss or on the characteristics of the male hero, but little work has been done on the way the female characters are represented in these films, even though they seem to be integral to them. Moreover, little work has been done in

⁴ ‘The degree of success of a film or play in terms of the number of people who go to watch it or the amount of money it makes’ (Collins 2022).

terms of comparing these two films, although the similarities are striking, especially in the way the women characters are represented.

This BA paper, therefore, will examine the construction of female characters through the lens of the concept of postfeminism, as defined by Rosalind Gill (2007, 2017). In addition, Ana Moya's (2013) notion of a cosmopolitan female subject will become relevant in the analysis of the film. The first goal of this BA paper is to analyze the representation of female characters in *The Bourne Identity* and *Unknown*. The second goal is to connect postfeminist ideas to the representation of cosmopolitan, travelling female subjects in action genre.

2. Theoretical Framework: Postfeminism and Cosmopolitan Female Subjects

This BA paper will use Rosalind Gill's work on the concept of postfeminism in two of her articles *Postfeminist media culture: elements of a sensibility* (2007) and *The affective, cultural and psychic life of postfeminism: A postfeminist sensibility 10 years on* (2017). Ana Moya's article *Neo-Feminism In-Between: Female Cosmopolitan Subjects in Contemporary film*, found in Joel Gwynne and Nadine Muller's (editors) book *Postfeminism and Contemporary Hollywood Cinema* (2013) will be used to analyse the representation of travelling female subjects in *The Bourne Identity* and *Unknown*. The texts will help to shed light on the way the female characters are represented in the context of the contemporary media culture.

2.1 Rosalind Gill's Notion of Postfeminism

Rosalind Gill, a professor at City, University of London, is one of the most prominent postfeminism and neoliberalism⁵ scholars. She is a sociologist, whose work mainly focuses on issues related to genre and male/female power inequality. In feminism and postfeminism studies, she is best known for her works *Postfeminist media culture: elements of a sensibility* (2007), *The affective, cultural and psychic life of postfeminism: A postfeminist sensibility 10 years on* (2017), *Gender and the Media* (2007) and her collaborations *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity* (2011), *Confidence Culture* (2021), and many others. The first two texts will be drawn on in the present study. The two articles were chosen because there is no agreement among scholars on what postfeminism means (Gill 2007: 147). In these two articles, R. Gill defined postfeminism as a sensibility, which includes a number of elements that define contemporary Anglo-American media (*Ibid.*). The two texts are ten years apart, therefore, they will be helpful in comparing whether postfeminism and its definition has changed during the years.

R. Gill wrote the first article as an attempt to tackle the highly problematic notion of postfeminism. There are three broad approaches to understanding postfeminism: "(...) epistemological/political position in the wake of feminism's encounter with 'difference' (Brooks, 1997; Alice; 1995; Yeatman 1994; Lotz, 2001); an historical shift within feminism (Hollows, 2000, 2003; Moseley

⁵ A form of liberalism, which supports free market and economic freedom (Collins 2022). 'In particular, neoliberalism is often characterized in terms of its belief in sustained economic growth as the means to achieve human progress' (Britannica 2022).

In postfeminist studies understood as "self-capitalization" through beauty and labor (Elias & Gill 2018: 64).

and Read, 2002; Dow, 1996; Rabinowitz, 1999) or a backlash against feminism (Faludi, 1992; Whelehan, 2000; Williamson, 2003)” (Gill 2007: 148).

R. Gill does not align herself with any of the approaches. She tries to define postfeminism as a sensibility⁶, which consists of a number of elements that are far more complex than the three broad approaches mentioned above, because they define the contemporary TV shows, films, advertisements and other cultural commodities of 21st century. She acknowledges that some scholars define postfeminism as a continuation of second wave feminism and some treat it as a backlash against feminism (Gill 2007: 148). She elaborates on the difficulty of defining what postfeminism is by drawing a parallel with postmodernism: ‘As Dick Hebdige (1988) noted in relation to postmodernism, this is an indication that there is something over which it is worth struggling’ (*Ibid.* p. 147). R. Gill intended to define postfeminism in the way that it would be helpful in analysing ‘contemporary cultural products’ (*Ibid.* p. 148), in this case, films.

First of all, the word *sensibility* is somewhat vague, but it describes how women react to and are affected by the society and the environment they live in. The conception of postfeminism as a sensibility encompasses a number of aspects, including an emphasis upon self-surveillance, a focus on individualism, the shift from objectification to subjectification, monitoring and self-discipline, choice and empowerment, a resurgence of ideas about natural sexual difference and the dominance of a makeover paradigm (Gill 2007: 149). To R. Gill, the aspect of bodily property is the most important one. She points out the obsession that the media has with attractive female bodies, which become the defining characteristic of women’s identity. As she explains, ‘(...) in news media all women’s bodies are available to be coded sexually- whether they are politicians, foreign correspondents or serious news anchors’ (*Ibid.* p. 150).

R. Gill points out the representation of women varies depending on the contexts, specifically the intended audience. For instance, in magazines targeted to men, women are represented as fun pleasure-seekers (Gill 2007: 155), which, on one hand, indicates that women are liberated subjects and their sexualization means that they are no longer represented as mute and passive (*Ibid.* p. 151). On the other hand, only beautiful and slim women are sexualized. (*Ibid.* p. 152). R. Gill claims that postfeminism should not be compared to feminism because the debate is no longer

⁶ ‘The ability to feel and react to something’ (*Cambridge Dictionary* 2022).

about pressure of inequality, but about women using their attractiveness to get what they want and to do whatever makes them feel 'good' (*Ibid.* p. 153-154).

Neoliberalism, according to Gill, becomes relevant in the context of postfeminism. She claims that in recent years, neoliberalism has moved from the political to other spheres, therefore, a postfeminist female is also a neoliberal individual, who is rational, self-regulating and can choose freely (Gill 2007: 163). Neoliberalism is often discussed in the context of surveillance, for instance, various companies and the state keeping and even selling personal data, surveillance practices of immigration control, as well as self-monitoring (Elias and Gill 2018: 62-63). This aspect of surveillance becomes very relevant in the context of the two films analyzed in this paper.

In the second article, which was written 10 years after the first one, Rosalind Gill revises the concept of postfeminism as a sensibility. She reconsiders how the changing world and rising misogyny, interest in feminism, nationalism and visible homophobia and racism affects the notion of postfeminism and the hegemony of the sensibility in contemporary society (Gill 2017). The author admits that she wrote the first article as an attempt to define the notion, which characterized the contradictory nature of 90s and early noughties media, especially related to questions of gender inequalities (*Ibid.* p. 607).

The author reconsiders the idea of postfeminism being a sensibility and discusses its relevancy nowadays. She argues that postfeminism rather than feminism defines early 90s and 2000s, and the notion has become even more complex and relevant nowadays (Gill 2017: 610-611). The monitoring of women's bodies is even more heightened nowadays (*Ibid.* p. 616), but she still agrees with the premise that women's bodies serve as tools to reach freedom and empowerment (*Ibid.*). As an example, she discusses the 'confidence cult', which influences women's psychological well-being and remakes feminism 'in neoliberal and psychologized terms', which means that contemporary world forces the idea that women's sources of problems and the solutions to them come from within women themselves (*Ibid.* p. 618). Although, the promoted confidence is contradictory. Women should not feel needy, complain, be insecure or angry in postfeminist terms: 'It mandates that women remain positive and upbeat in the face of continuing inequalities, pathologizing affective responses such as vulnerability and anger that register the injurious nature of neoliberal capitalism' (*Ibid.* p. 619), which indicates that not only women's bodies but also their

desires and emotions are being surveilled nowadays, which is the negative side of postfeminism and one of the defining features of neoliberalism. A.S Elias and R. Gill (2018: 63) write:

Neoliberalism has been broadly understood as a political and economic rationality characterized by privatization, a 'rolling back' and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision, alongside an emphasis "that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets and free trade" (Harvey, 2005: 2).

Neoliberal ideology promotes the idea that every person is responsible for themselves (Elias and Gill 2018: 63). R. Gill states that contemporary world is affected by migrants, various movements, debts and wars, not only that, such events as the election of Donald Trump, 'fake news' and Brexit influence postfeminist sensibility to move further away from movements of 'empowerment', 'girl power' and 'choice' towards 'global patriarchy' (2017: 608-609).

To sum up: R. Gill attempted to define what postfeminism is, because she believes that postfeminism is relevant and useful in order to reflect on the contemporary media culture even though the notion of it is difficult to define. The author reflects on female representation in contemporary society. She points out that women's bodies tend to be scrutinized by media and there is a particular focus on sexualization. Moreover, 10 years on, the surveillance on women's bodies is even more strengthened. R. Gill states that postfeminism is influenced by neoliberalism, which encourages women to seek gratification and freedom by all means, such as using their bodies, and their image in general, to reach their goals. She acknowledges that the modern world's uprising interests in nationalism and other right-wing movements has restored interest in feminism.

2.2 Ana Moya's Ideas on Cosmopolitan Female Subjects in Contemporary Hollywood Cinema

Since the women in both movies are shown as immigrants/travelers without a permanent residence (at least in *The Bourne Identity*), Ana Moya's ideas on cosmopolitan female subjects become helpful for reflecting on the way women are represented in both films. Ana Moya is Senior Lecturer and Head of Studies at the Facultat de Filologia, University of Barcelona. In her work, she focuses on women's studies, film studies, adaptation and British fiction, 19th century fiction. She is known for her publications *"I'm a Wild Success": Postmodern Dickens/Victorian Cuaron*

(with G. López) (2008), *The Politics of Re-presenting Vanity Fair: Mira Nair's Becky Sharp* (2010) etc. The text comes from *Postfeminism and Contemporary Hollywood Cinema* (2013), which is a collection of essays edited by Joel Gwynne and Nadine Muller.

In her article *Neo-Feminism In-Between: Female Cosmopolitan Subjects in Contemporary American Film*, the author claims that mobility has become one of the defining characteristics of modern world and it has become very easy to move between borders (Gwynne and Muller 2013: 14). Even though the author examines comedies, the topic of female empowerment through cosmopolitanism can be investigated in other genres as well. She provides an example of male and female travelling subjects: the former are often represented as figures of salvation and the latter are often heterosexual, middle-class, white tourists, who mostly find themselves in new spaces because of romantic experiences (*Ibid.* p. 14-15). In the end of their tourist experience, as the author claims, their life stabilizes (*Ibid.*).

The author calls a travelling female subject an 'in-betweener' (Gwynne and Muller 2013: 24), meaning that they are able to construct the *self* by moving around in different cultural environments (*Ibid.* p. 13). The kind of cinema, which represents travelling women, manages to include the 'local' and the 'global' (*Ibid.*). The woman who chooses to travel is the cosmopolitan female, who wishes '(...) to live by the border to seek enlightenment and the power to make her own choices' (*Ibid.* p. 24).

In her discussion on cosmopolitanism, the author reflects on neoliberalism (the idea discussed by R. Gill as well). Under this ideology, the cult of individuality is promoted. The author claims that post-feminism has "very little to do with feminism" (quoted in Gwynne and Muller 2013: 15) and positions women as capable of professional and material success by remaining feminine (*Ibid.* p. 24).

For her, the cosmopolitan female subject is a woman who uses travelling as one of consumer commodities (Gwynne and Muller 2013: 24). Travelling is one of the means to fulfill and reshape oneself (*Ibid.*). Contemporary movies with travelling female subjects do not push marriage and maternity on women but focuses on their individual choices, which is the core of neo-liberalism (*Ibid.* p. 23-24). All in all, the author describes a travelling female subject as '(...) a neo-liberal

female subject that defines itself as cosmopolitan, with a vision of world citizenship and proving its ability to mediate between different cultures positively' (*Ibid.* p. 24).

3. Postfeminism and Cosmopolitanism in *The Bourne Identity* and *Unknown*

Section 3.1 will focus on how the female characters are represented through the lens of postfeminism. Section 3.2 will focus on the aspect of travelling and how women are represented as cosmopolitan subjects.

3.1 Postfeminism in *The Bourne Identity* and *Unknown*

In both of the films, the traditional female roles, especially the image of a woman as a housewife, are not used to represent the female characters. Marie and Gina are young women who travel alone and do not have a permanent residence (Marie lives in her car and Gina's apartment is also temporal). The women break traditional gender roles, which is very typical of action films (Tasker 2015: 33). Marie, who is a female heroine in the movie, is a young woman, who becomes the romantic interest of the hero and his accomplice throughout the film. Postfeminist media does not regard female body as social property, meaning that it is up to women to make choices about their bodies (Widdows and Cirion 2006: 189). Motherhood is not a central aspect of woman's life, instead, contemporary media is preoccupied with *sexy* woman's body (Gill 2007: 149), which, under postfeminism, becomes one of the most important ambitions in woman's life.

Some postfeminism scholars go as far as to claim that portraying a woman as a housewife deprives her of her self-identity. S. Genz and B. A. Brabon, for instance, state that there are authors who claim that such domestic portrayal of women has a dehumanizing effect (2009: 52-53), which is a very radical statement that the notion of R. Gill's postfeminism does not correlate with. Although postfeminism does not encourage women to settle down, neither does it reject domesticity or maternity. There is a moment in the movie when Marie is dreamily glaring through the window at Bourne playing with the kids (1:20:59). The scene might indicate that she does not completely reject maternity and possibility of having a family. What S. Genz and B. A. Brabon mean is that limiting a woman to a domestic lifestyle restricts her from living an adventurous life. Marie is capable of having both. Postfeminism is preoccupied with *sexy* woman's body, but it also supports choice (Gill 2007: 155). Marie chooses to join Bourne and she is happy to be reunited with him at the end, which indicates that their relationship will continue. Women can be housewives if they choose to and there is nothing dehumanizing about it.

To deal with the postfeminist preoccupation with the female body, it is important to discuss the *mise-en-scène*⁷ of the film, especially the way Marie is portrayed visually. She is shown wearing tight clothes throughout the film, but they are not too revealing. She is a lower middle-class woman from the west (Gill 2017: 610). Her alternative style appears to be correlating with her edginess. On her first encounter with Bourne, she has strands of her hair dyed red, some strands bleached, and she is wearing a leather coat and has a tattoo, therefore, her style provides clues about her character, ethics and aesthetics (*Ibid.*). In contemporary media, a woman is expected to express herself through her appearance/style, but she must obey a particular dress code of her gender (Jolles 2012: 45). Her appearance indicates that she rejects conventions and codes imposed on her by the society. When Marie and Jason Bourne come to her friend's place he asks if she got Bourne into trouble (1:20:26), which also indicates that Marie's style complements her character.

Nicky, the other female character of the film, stands in stark contrast with Marie. Her appearance is characterized by the notions of conventional female beauty and style. She is blond, wears a turtleneck and a suit, when she meets an assassin, she is wearing a long coat and a beret. Her appearance is different from Marie's, whose style indicates that she is a 'rule-breaker', while Nicky is shown as a 'rule-bound' woman in her appearance (Jolles 2012: 54).

Marie is also the one being surveilled, and Nicky is the one who surveils, by literally using various spy equipment. Nicky has to follow the rules and look a certain way because she has to stay unnoticed since her job is to clean up messes. In postfeminist media culture, women monitor each other's behaviors and appearances (Gill 2017: 617). The representation of both women can be understood as a metaphor. A woman dressed in an alternative style is being surveilled by a woman embodying conventional fashion, which represents the pressure from the society to become *normal*. Moreover, Marie is being surveilled not only by Nicky, but by the whole unit of CIA throughout the film. Surveillance is a feature of neoliberalism. Women are expected to monitor their own bodies to be their best selves, while at the same time, their bodies are monitored by the media (Elias and Gill 2018: 65). Because of this surveillance, Marie, later on, has to change her style. She is too conspicuous.

⁷ In film refers to all elements that comprise a single shot, such as the actors and their costumes, props setting, lighting. (*Merriam-Webster* 2022)

The only scene where Marie's body is represented in a revealing manner is when Bourne is washing her hair in the bathroom. There are no shots that would focus on specific parts of her body. The sex scene is left out, the camera only focuses on Bourne's bullet marks on his back. R. Gill states that women are represented as agents monitoring emotional and sexual relationships, meaning that it is their responsibility to present themselves as desirable, autonomous and sexually empowered (Gill 2007: 151), which is exactly what Marie does, she is the one initiating sexual intercourse; she kisses Bourne first, while he acts confused.

Marie is self-aware of her sexuality and the effects it has on men. She uses objectification (the fact that she is objectified by men) as a strength. When Bourne sketches out the whole plan of how she should enter the hotel and what should she look for (01:04:09), she does not even need to use it, she comes back and tells Bourne that a guy was smiling at her at the front desk, and he just simply gave the records to her when she asked for them. Postfeminist media culture tends to represent women as autonomous and no longer constrained subjects, who use their beauty to distract men 'take over the businesses' and make themselves feel good (Gill 2007: 153-154).

Being an individual in neoliberal society is undermined by finances. Money plays an important role; the working class is affected by a Global Financial Crisis, welfare cuts and various restrictions, such as tuitions, visas etc. (Gill 2017: 608). Marie seems reluctant to take Bourne to Paris and only agrees when he tosses her a bundle of cash. Marie is not constrained by power imbalance (Gill 2007: 153), she is not threatened by Bourne, she agrees to drive him willingly. It is not surprising that she is attracted to the cash that Bourne offers but she is with Bourne not only because it would help her financial situation. In the scene where they are already at Bourne's apartment, the mutual attraction is evident. At first, Marie has to sacrifice her independence because she needs money but having the opportunity to take the money and just drive back, Marie chooses to join Jason Bourne on his further route.

It is worth noting that Paris, where the majority of the film takes place, is not represented through a typical romantic lens. Although such bright representation of Paris is dominant in romance and comedy genres, it also appears in Hollywood action films (Gkritzali *et al.* 2016: 2366). Spy films are the minority of films that project Paris as a violent and harsh place (*Ibid.*). Since Marie is not a naïve tourist, Paris for her is not the romantic city of lights and love. Her intentions reflect the

bleak representation of Paris as a global city with immigrants, spies and crime. The film is shot in motivated lighting, which imitates existing light sources (Nicholson 2010: 197). There is a moment of departure from the natural lighting when Marie is driving the car. She is in a very enclosed space, everything is dark, only her face is lit in dark green from a dashboard lights and half of Bourne's face is lit by the streetlights. She turns her head to look at sleeping Bourne (0:35:38), which indicates that she is thinking about him and feeling compassion towards him.

With the help of Jason Bourne, Marie goes through a makeover in the film. In the previously mentioned scene where Bourne washes her hair, he helps her dye and cut her hair short, so they could not be recognized. It is not a typical makeover promoted in contemporary media, such as getting slimmer, becoming better etc. (Gill 2017: 620). At this point the title of the film becomes important. Although the title *The Bourne Identity*, which sounds like 'born identity', mostly relates to the protagonist, it also applies to Marie. As it was mentioned above, Marie does not have a permanent residence but has a car and is able to travel. Her car is her home, and she lets Bourne into it. Because of letting Bourne into her car (therefore into her life as well), he makes her change. She has to get rid of her alternative appearance for a man, to fit in and to hide from CIA. She is creating a new identity for herself with the help of Jason Bourne. She can no longer be Marie that she was before meeting him. Such change indicates that makeovers are necessary for women to be happy. At the end, just before reuniting with Bourne, Marie is wearing a burgundy dress and renting scooters in Mykonos. Even the lighting changes; everything is bright and summery. Marie looks happy and relaxed. She is no longer the same edgy Marie, who was struggling with her visa at the beginning of the film.

The two women are not denied their feelings. Unlike the typical representation of women where they have to be obedient and restrained, their emotions are let loose. In the apartment fighting scene, which happens 40 minutes into the movie, Marie runs towards the assassin asking him where he got her picture from. Coming out of apartment, she gets sick and throws up when she sees the housekeeper's dead body. When Bourne asks if she would run away together with him, she does not give him a definite answer and says that she does not know. While Bourne is sitting there in the car looking through the window, she tells him that she gets talkative when she's nervous. Typically, women in neoliberal postfeminist media, must refuse a wide range of emotions, such as anger, insecurity, neediness etc. (Gill 2017: 619). Marie and her emotions of

anger, insecurity and nervousness, are not glamorized nor are they glazed. She is represented as a human being. Even though Nicky is not as prominent as Marie in the movie, she is also not constrained of her emotions. She works with very dangerous people. When she gives a note to the assassin, she looks scared (1:22:40).

On the other hand, postfeminist media regulates the range of emotions that women can go through. Marie must have a witty side to her but only to a certain extent. When Bourne tells her that he cannot remember anything about his life, she says, 'Lucky you' (0:31:34), when Bourne is buzzing his own doorbell she says, 'I guess you're not home' (0:38:25). Women 'cannot win' (Gill 2007: 157), meaning that if they are only funny, then, according to ideologies of dominant gender, they are labeled as masculine (Tully 2018: 5). If they are too 'flawed' (Gill 2007: 156), in this case too emotional, they need to be fixed. Therefore, representing Marie as emotional but at the same time funny, demonstrates 'resilient individuality' (Gill 2017: 619.). It is easier for a man to fall in love with a woman who is not neurotic or needy (see Gill 2007: 154). As the main female character, Marie must balance between funny and emotional, which makes her likeable.

Duality is one of the main organizing principles in *Unknown*. This is especially clear from the selection of the city for the setting of the film. The novel on which the film is based is set in Paris, but, the director, Jaume Collet-Serra felt that the city is too romantic, and he needed a different place, a fractured city which is still looking for its own identity (Roxborough 2011). Therefore, Berlin, a post-socialist, but at the same time, a post-western-stroghold city (Tölle 2010: 349), was chosen. The dual nature of the film is most clearly introduced through the title. At first, the word 'known' appears on the screen and then the prefix 'un' follows. Similarly, the two parts are highlighted in different colors in the poster of the film.

The sense of duality of the cinematic space is embodied through the characters in the film. There are two main female characters and two Martin Harrises. One of the women is Elizabeth, 'Liz', the protagonist's wife and the other one is Gina, an illegal immigrant from Bosnia. The viewer is introduced to Elizabeth at the beginning of the movie. The camera focuses on Martin Harris sitting on a plane. The light is coming through a small window, so everything but him is shrouded in darkness. Then, the camera moves back, and the viewer sees that a woman sleeping right next to him. In this shot, only two of them are visible. This kind of lighting, called low-key lighting, is

often used to convey the seriousness of the characters or even to reveal that they have a dark side (Nicholson 2010: 199-200). Indeed, from the very start, the cinematic devices suggest that the situation is not what it seems, and the characters are not what they appear to be.

The aspect of duality is realized internally as well, and Elizabeth is playing two roles. On the surface, she is represented as a typical heroine in Hollywood films, a supportive, loving wife, and a tourist (see Gwynne and Muller 2013), but at the same time she is a trained assassin. The film plays with our expectations of gender roles. The viewer, together with Martin, believes that she, as this loving wife, is held hostage and Martin needs to rescue her. Hence, the viewer does not expect the twist and only later on, we find out that she is an assassin. The aspect of the title becomes relevant: known vs. unknown. We think that we know Elizabeth but, in fact, we do not.

Elizabeth is often filmed from further away, therefore, the viewer's gaze focuses on her body. For instance, she is filmed from behind; camera focusing on her sleek figure and blonde hair (0:17:29). Her 'sexy body' resembles her wish to be perceived as an assertive and confident woman (Gill 2007: 153), which is a part of her act. Such shots of her body, persuade the viewer that she is a high-class woman, married to a scientist, therefore her appearance serves to convince everyone around her that she shall not be doubted.

Elizabeth's body is her tool for work, which she uses for her own advantage to empower herself. In film, action heroines are often sexualized, and their power or powerlessness is presented through their bodies (Tasker 2002: 147, 166). Her mannerisms and looks do indeed suggest that she holds some authority. She is never shown on camera without makeup or with messy hair in public. Elizabeth has a nice posture; her statue exemplifies discipline that female body has to convey in postfeminist media (Gill 2017: 616). She can fool men around her by using her looks alone. Professor Bressler remarks that he is not surprised that anyone would want to be her husband (1:34:42). By the way she presents herself, she manages to put in and take out a USB flash drive without Professor Bressler ever noticing. He even leaves his laptop, which contains information worth billions of dollars alone, because Elizabeth insists that it will be safe there.

Elizabeth's character is complex in the sense that she embodies contradictory postfeminist ideals about female empowerment. Postfeminist heroines are encouraged to make individual choices

(Gill 2007: 162). Although Elizabeth is co-dependent on Martin Harris, she is the one in control of the assassination scheme after the real Martin Harris disappears. On the other hand, she makes the choice to deactivate the bomb and dies at the end. Her death is familiar to what *femme fatale*, which was so feared in American *film noir* era, faced. *Femme fatale* was the result of post-war male fears of a strong independent woman, who could take over men's jobs (McDermott 2018). She is a dominant and sexualized character, and she is always punished for her crimes (Mennel 2008: 47), which represented that beautiful but destructive women, who were a threat to men, did not have a future in society.

Elizabeth's death might suggest that such fears are still prominent. She is not reliant on a man to fight her fights. For instance, when she and Martin come to the hotel, the receptionist tells her that their suit is not available, she says, 'What do you mean the suit might not be available?' (0:05:36). She is an assertive confident woman who knows what she wants. When Martin disappears, she has a substitute for him. Gina and Elizabeth go through a reinvention of their identities. Liz, a loving wife, becomes an assassin and Gina, an illegal immigrant, becomes a Canadian citizen. In contemporary postfeminist media, women have to go through a transformation or reinvention (Gill 2007: 156). A. Taylor states that marriage in 20th and 21st century media is still viewed as a 'social victory' and singleness for a woman, is something to be solved (2014: 21). *Unknown* is a more recent film; therefore, Elizabeth's death might support R. Gill's claims that there is an uprising interest in misogyny and global patriarchy especially evident nowadays (2017: 606, 609).

Gina's character embodies a different kind of experience, that of an immigrant. She is also a tough woman, who is not afraid to work for her future in Germany. She acts quick, she is not afraid to fight, or drive fast, she even steals a taxi to save Martin. She is seen working as a taxi driver, later, a waitress. When Martin Harris offers his watch to her and she puts it on her wrist, she says, 'Sentiment, it's always the first thing to go' (0:49:30). She takes the watch because of necessity. Individualism is an integral part of the ideals that neoliberalism promotes (Gill 2007: 162) and as it is mentioned above, money plays an important role in neoliberal society. There is an instance when Gina shows the sum of money written on a piece of paper and says, 'This is me' (0:52:49). This sum of money is an emancipation for Gina (Gill 2017: 620), which she no longer needs to collect because Martin Harris provides her with a new passport.

3.2 Cosmopolitan Subjects in *The Bourne Identity* and *Unknown*

The concepts of postfeminism and cosmopolitanism are interrelated. An integral part of reinvention or transformation, which is promoted in postfeminism (see Gill 2007, 2017), is also the main reason why females travel in contemporary American and European cinema (see Gwynne and Muller 2013).

Marie's cultural and national identity is not specified in the film, which is unusual for transnational cinema. In fact, cultural specificity is one of the defining factors of transnational cinema (Gwynne and Muller 2013: 13). There is a scene where CIA agents are looking at the map and counting all the places where Marie has lived in the past 6 years. The agent counts five (1:18:04) and says, 'the girl's a gypsy' (0:32:55). He mentions that she is a chaotic person and has left unpaid bills in Spain and Belgium. The notion of cosmopolitanism can be divided into two parts. The first part deals with the detachment from a person's place of origin, refusal to account for local authorities and jurisdictions (Robbins and Horta 2017: 2). The second part of it is a membership in some larger collective (*Ibid.*). CIA mentions that Marie was born outside of Hannover, but that is all information that the viewer gets about Marie's nationality.

Marie is in search of her place in the world. Her character is defined by mobility (Gwynne and Muller 2013: 13). The first scene when the viewer is introduced to Marie, she is at the U.S. Embassy complaining that she has still not acquired a visa, which only proves that she moves extensively. Before meeting Bourne, Marie travels alone. In most European and American films women are represented as tourists and they travel because of romantic interests (Gwynne and Muller 2013: 15). Marie is on the run with Bourne because CIA is after them.

Nicky is not a tourist; therefore, she breaks the stereotypes of transnational cinema. She travels because of her job, which involves providing CIA with necessary information by monitoring agents and suspects. Cosmopolitanism is a form of transnationalism, which requires handling political and cultural varieties (Gwynne and Muller 2013: 14). In *The Bourne Identity*, all of the CIA agents are mostly men, apart from Nicky. As it is mentioned above, Nicky is involved in surveillance, which is significant in the sense that in postfeminist media, women tend to be involved in putting other women down for the way they look or don't look. Travelling is a tool for

Nicky to get her job done, which only proves that the surveillance of all aspects of women's lives is borderless and done to women by other women as well as men.

As it was mentioned before, Gina is an immigrant, therefore, she is not a tourist. She tells Martin that she has seen men like that before (assassins) and she had to leave Bosnia because they had killed her entire family (1:04:20). Gina is staying in Germany illegally. Unlike Marie in *The Bourne Identity*, Gina rents a place, which is a very small apartment with paper-thin walls in the outskirts of the city together with other immigrants. She says to Martin, 'The walls are made of cardboard, but it's home' (0:50:37). B. Szerszynski and J. Urry claim that such people who do not belong to the nation-state⁸ were always marginalized throughout history and had to confront struggles (2002: 461). When Martin Harris comes to look for her, the manager of the taxi company that Gina worked for, says in German that illegal immigrants are destroying German society (0:29:21), which sheds a light on immigration from the perspective of the local.

Gina is a cosmopolitan subject, who is trying to adapt to German society and being open to other cultures as well. Cosmopolitanism is one's way into other cultures, which requires self-reflecting in order to diminish the distance with people and events (Szerszynski and Urry 2002: 469). Gina is multilingual, she speaks to Martin in English, to Germans she speaks in German. She is able to adapt in every situation. Cosmopolitanism is related to the ability to mediate between cultures (Gwynne and Muller 2013: 14). Gina's friends are people from other cultures. For instance, Biko, whom she kisses on the cheek (0:54:09). He appears to be her close friend. Later, when he is killed by the assassins, she says that his family in Africa will start wondering why the money stopped coming (1:04:03-09). Biko's story provides an insight into the global and the local (Gwynne and Muller 2013: 14) life of many immigrants, who travel abroad to support their families left in their home country. Being an immigrant does not make a person cosmopolitan. Cosmopolitanism is being open and tolerant to other cultures rather than economic or social equality (Binnie *et al.* 2006: 187). Gina is cosmopolitan because she manages to make a living, find friends and connections in a country, which considers her as the other⁹, or as it was mentioned before, an illegal immigrant, who is not a part of homogenous German society.

⁸ Members of the core national group see the state as belonging to them and consider the approximate territory of the state to be their homeland' (*Britannica* 2022).

⁹ A member of a group that is perceived as foreign, different, strange etc. (*Dictionary.com* 2022).

It is worth mentioning that Gina does not go through any kind of physical makeover in the film. She has many visible piercings in her ears and a small braid hanging alone from the rest of her hair. She is mostly wearing jeans and a hoodie throughout the film. She is, just like Elizabeth, a skinny, beautiful blonde. Such representation is maintained throughout the film. The only thing that changes is her name. It can be a representation of choices that women have to face in contemporary world (Gwynne and Muller 2013: 20). Gina was struggling by herself before Martin Harris showed up. Her getting involved with him, completely destroyed the life that she was making on her own.

As mentioned above, duality is used to construct meaning in the film. Gina's identity becomes dual. Gina does not travel, in the first place, because she can, she leaves Bosnia because she has no other choice. In the end, she somewhat benefits from the change of culture and environment and is able to reshape herself (Gwynne and Muller 2013: 16) by attaining a new passport, which cost Gina her past identity. Gina is no longer Gina, she becomes Claudia Marie Taylor, meaning that she is married to Martin Harris, whose name now is Henry Taylor (1:47:46-48:00). It could be an indication that marriage is the only way out for women, especially, women in such vulnerable financial situation as Gina. On the other hand, there are clues throughout the film that she is romantically interested in Martin. For instance, her look when she sees Martin Harris kissing Elizabeth (1:12:51). Also, she no longer needs to work hard to gather the sum of money that is needed for her to start a new life (0:52:48). It is possible that Gina uses the fictitious marriage to gain what she wants, which is a postfeminist move (Gill 2007: 153). Although when it comes to dating, postfeminist media tends to promote traditional values by presenting them as choices made completely in free will (*Ibid.* p. 154). Even being strong and brave, Gina still cannot make it on her own and must choose marriage in the end.

4. Conclusions

R. Gill's theory of postfeminist sensibility partially fits the portrayal of female characters in the films. The representation of women in these two films is not simplistic and, in fact, Hollywood action films do not provide simplified representations of women. It appears that in the predominantly male-oriented action genre, women are not necessarily represented as objects of male-gaze or desires. Postfeminist media promotes individuality and choice; therefore, the female characters are able to travel and mediate between cultures. On the other hand, one of the most important aspects defining postfeminism and neoliberalism is surveillance and self-surveillance, which could be understood as a metaphor in both films. Women are observed by men and women (*The Bourne Identity*), which only supports the fact that in postfeminist media women are scrutinized for the way they look or do not look, by males and females. Although women are empowered through their bodies and intelligence, it seems that anti-feminist ideas are present in both films; female characters who choose to stay with the male protagonists survive and are rewarded. Marie and Gina can reshape their lives and live happily elsewhere. Elizabeth, who is independent and dangerous, has to die at the end.

Many people have a negative attitude towards Hollywood films, but this analysis shows that, in fact, these films are far more complex. The representation of women is not one dimensional; their portrayal matches the complexity of the representation of men. However representative of the action genre *The Bourne Identity* and *Unknown* are, it might be difficult to make far-reaching conclusions just from the two films. It would be interesting to see how/if the representation of women characters in the latest box-office hits align or differ from the films analyzed in this BA paper.

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Summary in Lithuanian

Postfeminizmas veiksmo filmuose: kosmopolitiškos moterys Dougo Limano filme „Bornas: sunaikinta tapatybė“ ir Jaume'ės Collet-Serra'os filme „Nežinomas“

Šiame baigiamajame darbe nagrinėjami du filmai – amerikiečių režisieriaus Dougo Limano „Bornas: sunaikinta tapatybė“ (angl. *The Bourne Identity*) ir ispanų kilmės režisieriaus Jaume'ės Collet-Serra'os „Nežinomas“ (angl. *Unknown*). Abu filmai fiksuoja dvejus, labai panašius pagrindinių veikėjų likimus. Abu herojai netenka atminties ir leidžiasi ieškoti savo tapatybės. Jiems padeda sutiktos keliaujančios moterys. Šiame baigiamajame darbe remiamasi Rosalind Gill postfeminizmo kaip jautrumo konceptu, kuris yra aprašytas dviejuose jos straipsniuose „Postfeminist media culture elements of a sensibility“ ir „The affective, cultural and psychic life of postfeminism: A postfeminist sensibility 10 years on“. Kadangi filme vaizduojamos moterys keliauja arba neturi pastovios gyvenamosios vietos (pvz. Marie ir Gina), Ana Moya straipsnis „Neo-Feminism In-Between: Female Cosmopolitan Subjects in Contemporary American Film“ veikale „Postfeminism and Contemporary Hollywood Cinema“, padės nustatyti kaip veiksmo filmai laužo stereotipinį keliaujančių moterų reprezentavimą. Personažės perteikia skirtingas patirtis svetimoje šalyje. Jos yra vaizduojamos taip, kaip yra būdinga šiuolaikinėje postfeministinėje neoliberalioje medijoje. Pagal R. Gill postfeminizmo konceptą reprezentuojami yra tik gražių, baltaodžių, heteroseksualių, lieknų moterų kūnai. Šis bakalauro darbas atkleidžia, kad šiuose dviejuose filmuose moterų reprezentacija dalinai remiasi postfeminizmui ir neoliberalizmui būdingais elementais: jos yra sekamos, dėmesys yra kreipiamas į jų kūnus ir į tai, kaip jos perteikia save. Tačiau, jos taip pat, yra drąsios, gebančios naviguoti ir išgyventi skirtingose kultūrose. Deja, filmų pabaigoje pagrindinės herojės turi savo ankstesnę tapatybę palikti užnugaryje.