
Urbanism, Transgression and the Feminist Re-appropriation of the Gaze: Contesting Gender Roles in *A Question of Silence*

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Abstract

In her 1982 film *A Question of Silence*, Dutch feminist filmmaker Marleen Gorris poses an astute critical commentary on the performance of femininity and the enactment of gender roles within the rigid patriarchal conventions of an ostensibly liberal urban society. Through Gorris's cinematic lens, the delineation of her subjects' personal and cultural boundaries are presented as inextricably bound with the spatial and institutional realms they occupy, thus informing their repressed identities as subjects in need of personal and social gratification. Her female protagonists, who only occupy peripheral social roles and institutional spaces, commit the ferocious murder of a shop owner, when he condescendingly affirms his position as the emblem of patriarchy. By averting the transgression of shoplifting, an act committed in an erratic attempt to destabilize the sexist status quo asphyxiating the protagonists, the victim unites them in a liberating violent eruption and an idiosyncratic omerta. My paper, "Urbanism, Transgression and the Feminine Re-appropriation of the Gaze," explores the ways in which the protagonists are contained and confined by their physical surroundings, the urban landscape, their domestic environment and the social institutions demarcated by Gorris as the cradle of patriarchy. I argue that the women's struggle to reclaim those spaces through their personal narratives and the disruptive effect of their silence and laughter is a conscious attempt to reconfigure the ways in which they are envisaged by society. Moreover, I argue that the intricate web of multiple gazes imposed on women in the film is re-appropriated by them as a means of acknowledging their denigrated status and consequently orchestrating the fatal attack. The implementation of Mulvey's theoretical assertions concerning the application of the gaze enables the possibility of redress, while the protagonists' final confinement in prison evokes Foucauldian notions of surveillance and control, which

are indicative of the meta-fictional interplay of surveillance and voyeurism inherent both in social constructs and the cinematic medium in particular. Finally, the paper explores the fixity of gender roles within patriarchal constructs under the scope of performativity and examines the possibility of an alternative feminist vision concerning social configurations of personal and public life.

Feminists have been contesting the fixity of gender roles within patriarchy through an array of discursive media, covering a wide spectrum of experiences in their attempt to challenge the status quo and to offer insights on the formation of gender identity. Placing the emergent tensions in the urban landscape has been the natural outcome of postmodernity, as the shift towards metropolitan cities has demarcated new realms of possibility for the performance of gender. Indubitably, the newly established societal conventions and social interactions in post-modern urban settings have offered ample impetus for contemplation regarding the rendering of gender roles within these urban topographies. This paper seeks to explore the ways in which urban settings constitute an arena for the contestation of gender roles. In order to illustrate my argument I will turn to Marleen Gorris's *A Question of Silence* (1982), a film that touches upon the possibility and impossibility of contesting gender roles with remarkable insight. This task is twofold: it begins with a discussion on the re-appropriation of the masculine gaze as imposed on women within modern patriarchal societies, and then proceeds to examine the intricate relationship between performativity and gender, under the scope of psychoanalysis. In the first instance, the masculine gaze, formulated through the lens of societal conventions and cultural expectations, solidifies an asphyxiating social setting that renders women passive receptacles of cultural meaning. Similarly, in terms of gender and performativity, the former appears to be inscribed and performed as a perpetuating policing device for the sake of heteronormativity and social stability. Gorris aims to dismantle both premises and to offer a diverse outlook on the formation of gender, by challenging patriarchal rhetoric and utilizing alternative means for the communication of meaning.

Distrustful of language as a semiotic system overridden by the law of the father, Gorris resorts to laughter and silence—as disruptions of that system—to convey meaning. The protagonists of

A Question of Silence, three women who have never previously met, commit the vicious murder of a shop-owner whom they kill and subsequently castrate in an outburst of repressed anger. Their murderous eruption is entirely discordant with their previous deeds, which abide by the conventions of patriarchy in their entirety, and thus a psychologist is called forth to examine their mental status. The psychologist, Dr. Van der Boss, strives to comprehend the intricacies and the underlying premises of the act that transformed three previously innocuous women to brutal murderers. Soon, she finds herself entangled in the same conflict with the status quo, despite the ostensibly elevated position that she occupies in the social hierarchy. Her denial to pronounce these women mentally unstable instigates turmoil that severely affects her professional endeavors, as well as her personal life. The conflicts that emerge in her previously harmonious relationship with her husband, who feels that their careers are being unnecessarily jeopardized and fears their social and professional marginalization, assist her identification with the murderers and enable a vantage point that she previously thought unattainable.

The film starts in medias res as the women having committed the crime return to their normal lives and await their forthcoming arrest. In those few sequences preceding their arrest, the three protagonists are not attempting to flee; on the contrary, they adhere to their usual routine, and thus the viewers witness snapshots of their everyday experiences within the public and domestic realms they occupy. Christina Maria is a housewife, looking after her husband and children, secluded within the walls of her house, not seeming to possess a distinct voice of her own; Annie is a waitress, whose menial job obliges her to sustain abrasive phallogocentric remarks from random men at her work site; Anna is a secretary who faces discrimination in her professional life as her contributions are met with condescending indifference, only to be rewarded when rearticulated by her male coworkers. Their sudden arrests come as a surprise; however, the realistic dimensions of the event are obscured by the attitudes of their social backgrounds. The men that comprise their social and domestic backgrounds judge their crime less by the murderous rage of the women and more by the inconvenience it instigates. This fact accentuates their social disposability, as Christina Maria, Annie and Anna seem to vanish into the judicial system leaving no trace of their previous identities behind.

This occurrence does not merely apply to the social and familial roles that they occupy, being professional women, workers, mothers and wives, but also extends to a more corporeal di-

mension that pertains to their physical disappearance through their confinement in prison. This effacement from the social, cultural and topographic settings they previously occupied is thus inextricably related to their inability to abide by stereotypical conventions pertaining to women. As a result they are excluded from the social realm, while they are also discredited as mentally unstable for their disengagement from the cultural expectations engendered by patriarchy.

In the scene following their respective arrests, the protagonists are found in the police department, where Gorris manipulates the *mise-en-scène* as follows: a male police officer is strategically placed in front of the world map and behind a typewriter, to symbolically assert his authoritative status as the emblem of patriarchy. His dominance over “world” and “word” is thus immediately asserted, in a cinematic maneuver that explicitly indicates his power over their lives and deeds. As the officer reads out to them their ghost-written “confessions,” which they are asked to sign in return, the revelation that they have not been previously introduced astounds him and introduces the focal element of the film: female solidarity. The presence of the psychologist is thus rendered necessary since the crime is not premeditated, but rather emerges as a sudden violent outburst of the feminine collective.¹ The psychologist thus interprets the spontaneity of the crime as a phenomenon stemming from the diverse social experiences instigated by gender inequity and perpetuated to the extent that the feminine collective acquires murderous qualities to fulfill its liberating potential.

Interestingly, the arena in which these tensions are enacted is a distinctively urban setting, the shopping mall. Designed to foster social as well as fiscal relations, the shopping mall in this case fosters the protagonists’ estrangement from mainstream concepts of communality and their final transgression to murder. Part of the feminist estrangement from the shopping mall is associated with the dialectic that marks women as marginal occupants of financial constructs, being only minor contributors to financial advancement. This fact is clearly illustrated in the conditions that Anna is facing in her professional environment, but is also inextricably bound with a fundamental feminist preoccupation regarding the distinction between the private and the public sphere. Women are therefore portrayed through Gorris’s lens as being severely restricted within urban landscapes, as they appear to occupy such realms only marginally. Their inability to be equal participants of the urban experience is due to the lack of control over the social and institutional

forces that condition their lives. As a result, what is reflected through urban topography is a distinctly gendered experience that affects their social status as citizens to the core. This stratification of the urban setting is therefore of paramount importance in deciphering the sociopolitical motives behind the murderous attack.

Moreover, women’s clothing, the merchandise traded in the shop where the murder takes place, alludes to the expectation of feminine conformity with socially acceptable gender roles. In the crucial moments before the murder, the protagonists are placed in the cradle of patriarchal expectations, and thus their violent revolt acquires elevated layers of symbolic meaning. The institutionalized context within which they find themselves, namely the fashion industry that produces formulaic prototypes of feminine beauty, instead of instigating in them the desire to embellish themselves with adornments for the aesthetic pleasure of men, aggravates and oppresses them further. Their revolt is initially expressed via a minor act of incomppliance that rapidly escalates. In order to contest the authority of patriarchal conventions, Christina Maria commits an act of transgression by shoplifting a garment of clothing. The manager of the store immediately realizes the event, having kept them under constant surveillance, and intervenes in order to prevent it, pointing out societal limitations that render her act intolerable. Christina Maria attempts a liberating leap by silently insisting on her decision, thus renegotiating her social standing. The manager initially attempts to rationalize with her, but soon finds himself in the center of a fatal circle, as the women present in the store without previous meditation silently gather around him and attack. His willingness to articulate his argument verbally in order to deter her, and his reassurance that language and reason will disrupt her plans of transgression, are starkly contrasted with her resolution that silence is the only vehicle for the articulation of her point. His willingness to trust language as a semiotic system rests on the premise that it is preordained and controlled by patriarchal objectives; similarly, the protagonists’ insistence on silence connotes the awareness of this premise as well as its subsequent rejection on their behalf. His brutal killing and his subsequent castration signify their radical reaction towards an emblem of the patriarchal structures that contain them. Their idiosyncratic omerta, their accessory to murder and their attack—symbolically orchestrated with hangers to connote their identification with them and thus their objectified and disposable status—are all factors that constitute their new social role, radically inspired and brought to life in the heart of the city center.

In psychoanalytic terms, the physical effacement of an agent of patriarchy, along with his castration, the annihilation of his signifier as male, is indicative of a feminist effort to reclaim the phallus and thus a diverse positionality within the urban landscape. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey (2007) analyzed the political use of psychoanalysis in cinematic representations of femininity and emphasized the subconscious threat that women represent, lacking male genitalia, as personifications of the fear of castration. As Mulvey (2007) attested, "the paradox of phallogentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of castrated women to give order and meaning to its world" (p. 15). Mulvey explained that the paradox is not only based on the fear of castration that women represent, but also on their ability to procreate and thus introduce a child to the realm of the "symbolic." The "symbolic" is constituted by the "law of the father," the language of patriarchy and the assigned cultural meanings it communicates. According to this theory, woman is thus living an existence in limbo, in the periphery of society, unless she procreates and therefore provides herself with a compensatory surrogate for the phallus she lacks. In spite of her role as a mother, woman remains passive and silenced within the social realm, affording her male counterpart the generative possibilities that she lacks. As Mulvey (2007) argued, "woman stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker of meaning" (p. 15). The protagonists of the film occupy similar positions in their professional and personal conduct—a fact that they strive to subvert by committing a crime against the very powers that oppress them. Even the psychologist Dr. Van der Boss, an ostensibly liberated woman whose professional activity enables her to access the public sphere, finds herself entangled within the realm of patriarchy, which provides them with a rigid delineation of the boundaries within which she is allowed to operate. Her refusal to pronounce the murderers mentally unstable is her own act of transgression and revolt against a social apparatus that prescribes versions of acceptable conduct.

As a result, Gorris manipulates the cinematic medium to revert the way femininity is perceived in patriarchal contexts, and in doing so emphasizes the parallels regarding looking and being observed inherent in film. Mulvey's work concerning the imposition of the male gaze on feminine cinematic subjects is based on the premise that looking at women engenders pleasure, while in the meantime it informs their subjectivity with preconceived cultural stereotypes projected by

masculine desire. Simultaneously the gaze, inevitably affected by this desire, instigates the fear of castration and creates the need to reassure the masculine subject that he still possesses control over his feminine counterpart. Mulvey (2007) argued that:

Desireborn with language, allows the possibility of transcending the instinctual and the imaginary, but its point of reference continually returns to the traumatic moment of its birth: the castration complex. Hence the look, pleasurable in form, can be threatening in content and it is woman as representation/image that crystallizes this paradox. (p. 19)

In order to revert the patronizing effect of the masculine gaze, women in *A Question of Silence* engage in the exchange of an intricate web of gazes, averting the male gaze, exercising their own against the spectator and finally imposing their own feminine gaze mediated through the articulation of their desire and the utter rejection of societal conventions. As Mulvey (2007) argued, "there is no doubt that [the re-appropriation of the feminist gaze] destroys the satisfaction, pleasure and privilege of the 'invisible guest,' and highlights the way film has depended on voyeuristic active/passive mechanisms," designed to perpetuate the social status quo (p. 26). Interestingly the female gaze makes its debut in the film in the very moment of murder and castration, as a group of women gather around the three protagonists who actively participate in the murder. The group witnesses the event silently and derives pleasure from the horrid spectacle, devouring it with their eyes and thus "legitimizing" its status. Moreover, the identification of this group with the three murderers extends to their presence in court and their participation in the communal laughter, which indicates their resolute disengagement from patriarchy. In this way, their gaze in the moment of the murder becomes their claim to accessory, while their laughter in court signifies that they share the understated incentive of the murderers. Since the incentive has still not been explicitly articulated in a verbal manner, due to the semiotic limitations of language, silence and laughter are used creatively by these women to denote their support as well as a collective feminine stance towards the status quo. Their "desire" thus metaphorically acquires sociopolitical dimensions, which are in turn inextricably associated to subversion and violence, a definite "derailment" of femininity from a patriarchal perspective. Moreover, the protagonists resist the conventional rendering of their bodies in the topography of the screen as objects of desire in the same way that they challenge the displacement or confinement of their bodies in an urban context. Moreover, the protagonists resist the conventional rendering of their bodies in the topography of the screen as objects of desire in the same way that they challenge the displace-

ment or confinement of their bodies in an urban context. Through the rejection of the traditionally eroticized portrayal of femininity, Gorris hints at the existence of newly emergent cinematic conventions that bring to light politically and aesthetically avant-garde cinematic representations. Mulvey (2007) claimed that “the presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her usual presence tends to work against the development of a storyline, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation” (p. 19). On the contrary, depictions of femininity in *A Question of Silence* resist this construct and attempt to dismantle it. This is achieved through their insistence on avoiding patriarchal rhetoric; a resistance exhibited in their laughter, which destabilizes the normative rules of interaction, or communicated in their silence, thus denoting an indifference towards partaking in patriarchal discourses altogether. Christina Maria’s decision to remain silent does not stand for her willingness to relinquish control to patriarchy, but rather for her utter disrespect for the conventions that patriarchal language represents. Similarly, the women’s outburst in laughter, in the crucial moment of the trial, is perceived by men and by the representatives of the judicial system as a leap to insanity. The Judges’ fixation on the mental limitations that affect the conduct of these women is therefore due to the fact that they cannot recognize their concerns, let alone identify with them. For the protagonists as well as for the women gathered in court, laughter presents a symbolic break from masculine narratives of social power, and thus becomes the vehicle of their defiance and ultimate rejection of patriarchal conventions.

The protagonists’ rejection of the given power structures inevitably evokes Foucault’s views on the production and dissemination of said structures, since in their attempt to destabilize them they are in fact verifying their existence. Foucault argued that individuals do not simply enter preordained systems of power that shape their lives thereafter but, rather, that the relationship between the individual and societal power structures is far more perplexed and inherently reciprocal. In “Truth/ Power” Foucault (1980) stated:

The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is ... one of its prime effects. (p. 98)

By arguing that the system and the individual are mutually constitutive, Foucault inevitably pointed to the inextricable bond between knowledge and power, since knowledge is acquired and registered as a byproduct of sociopolitical power structures. “The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power,” Foucault (1980) noted (p. 52). Since “Knowledge,” as an umbrella term, encompasses the preconceived societal and cultural notions that we internalize depending on our experiences and our subject position, it is evident that both the protagonists and Dr. Van Der Boss face a struggle that pertains to challenging ostensibly ethical values to the same extent that it challenges societal conventions. By posing a question of sanity or the lack thereof in order to rationalize the protagonists’ deed, issues of power are intertwined with issues pertaining to knowledge and awareness. The assumption that the protagonists possessed the necessary mental capacities to “know” and be “aware” of the social ramifications resulting from their action instigates turmoil to the agents of patriarchy, since from their perspective it indicates a profound “ethical” crisis. It is thus evident that within patriarchal rhetoric “ethics” is interconnected with the effort to sustain their dominance and to contain feminist thought. An act as subversive as that is thus necessarily deemed insane and against the status quo.

As a result, Foucault’s arguments are naturally complicated by Gorris’s feminist agenda. Societal conventions do indeed form one’s subjectivity, or rather their subject position; however, assuming that social forces are the sole parameter in informing one’s identity entraps women in a discourse that inevitably deprives them of agency. Gorris seeks to destabilize this premise, and thus the protagonists’ laughter and silence serve as tools of paramount importance for the accomplishment of this goal. Similarly the expectation of the women’s reform in prison is dismantled as a non-viable hypothesis. The enactment of power and control through an institutionalized system such as prison does not appear to contribute to their rehabilitation, but rather creates a virtual as well as physical portal for their effacement. Their final confinement in prison is supremely depicted by Gorris in an emblematic scene in which they descend a staircase from the courtroom to the inner recesses of the building. The courthouse, with its rigid spatial demarcation and its multiple levels of accessibility, represents both the judicial system and masculine authority, and proves Gorris’s argument as the protagonists vanish from our eyesight and lose their status as citizens. The scene, which echoes with the dissonant sound of their laughter as they descend the stairs to their confinement, emphasizes their marginal status and their utter disposability. More-

over, the physical appearance of the prison from a distance, the domineering white towers surrounded by barbed wire, is haunting to the eyes of the viewer, as they appear to be a metaphor for the fixity, stability, and sanity that patriarchy ordains.

Furthermore, Gorris's poignant dialectic regarding power and the reclamation of feminine agency raises questions concerning the malleability of gender categories. Judith Butler (1990) in *Gender Trouble* reminded her readers that gender is a socially constructed category that is culturally informed and ordained by preconceived cultural notions; notions violently imposed to ensure heteronormativity and social stability. The mechanisms that generate and impose constructs of gender are indeed similar to those that instill and reproduce power, in the sense that "gender operates as an interior essence that might be disclosed, an expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates," as Butler (1990) argued (p. xv). Butler's statement echoed Foucault's arguments concerning the imposition and self-generating potential of power. The stimulating analogy that emerges from this correlation is indicative of the mechanisms that are at work in *A Question of Silence*, in the sense that gender and power are inextricably interconnected. For instance, Dr. Van Der Boss acquires her social status by manipulating gender roles according to the audience that she addresses. This process is subconscious rather than deliberate, as she adheres to a more feminine performance within the realm of domesticity, which she then abandons to embark on her public endeavors without discrediting her professional credibility. The conflict that emerges upon her encounter with the protagonists shatters the illusion that she is a liberated woman and deeply affects the ways in which she perceives herself and her relationship with her husband. In this case, as soon as Dr. Van Der Boss recognizes the violence embedded in stereotypical social configurations, she proceeds to challenge the oppressive social constructs that contain her. This process is, however, replete with complications that severely impede the reclamation of agency, due to the fact that compliance to gender roles inevitably influences one's vantage point and perception of reality. As Butler (1990) emphasized:

What we take to be "real," what we invoke as the naturalized knowledge of gender is in fact a changeable and revisable reality. Call it subversive or call it something else. Although this insight does not in itself constitute a political revolution, no political revolution it possible without a radical shift in one's notion of the possible and the real. (p. xxiv)

As a result, Dr. Van der Boss identifies with the rage of the protagonists that fuelled their murderous outburst; however, her own act of incomppliance is bound to the laws of patriarchy, since

she is professionally involved with the institutional system that decides their future. Van der Boss had thus internalized not only the semiotic system of patriarchy, but also that of the institution of justice, which evaluates their act on the basis of ethics and law, both being concepts determined by centuries of patriarchal domination. The realization of this fact that results in Dr. Van Der Boss's newly established awareness becomes the first step towards developing her newly inspired feminist consciousness and outlook on life.

Another instance indicative of gender role formation, agency, and power is evident in Anna's sexual encounter with a random man, an encounter that playfully challenges social stereotypes of gender appropriateness. Having already committed the crime, Anna walks in the street and is followed by a random man, whom she has never previously met. Assuming that she is a prostitute the man offers her money to engage in intercourse and Anna accepts. This event would normally be indicative of Anna's lack of agency, as it clearly signifies her commodification; however, Anna seems to consider it an act of acquiring agency and power over patriarchy. Interestingly, this fact stems from two significant parameters pertaining to patriarchy. Firstly, it is pertinent to the role of women within domesticity, as it is perpetuated through certain cultural expectations. As it was evident in the life of Christina Maria, domesticity is asphyxiating the protagonist, rendering her a servant rather than a mother or a wife, a fact that inevitably contributes to her muteness, since there is no audience willing to listen to her perspective. The role of the housewife is thus inextricably associated with producing services within the house and subsequently receiving a form of financial compensation, in that the spouse, who is thriving in the public domain, is providing for the family, and hence for the housewife. As it is evident in the case of Christina Maria, she is entirely deprived of agency and as a result her contribution to the household is perceived as auxiliary. Christina Maria's marriage is thus based on a financial exchange, similar to that attained between Anna and the man who is offering financial compensation for her "services." As a result, the second parameter that affects Anna's decision is the fact that engaging in intercourse freed from the ethical bounds of patriarchy allows her to reassert her agency and free will. At the same time, by receiving money as compensation, she is utilizing the very premises of the system in an effort to ridicule and challenge it. Similarly her attitude during intercourse, her active role in asserting control over the act, presents a reversal of stereotypical gender roles and offers an alternative outlook on feminine liberation and victimization.

By challenging patriarchal power constructs and the fixity of gender roles through her cinematic lens, Gorris aims to uncover the culturally embedded premises of patriarchy and to suggest the possibility of an alternative configuration of private and public life. This alternative vision is evident in manifestations of feminist discomfort towards the status quo throughout the film, but it is also provocatively articulated through Christina Maria's sketches in the pad that Dr. Van Der Boss has provided her with. Distrustful of language as well as by the possibilities that it engenders regarding communication, Christina Maria's silent contemplation had been disrupted only to laugh at the patriarchal inability to perceive of the motive underlying their act; yet, her sketches offer viewers a glimpse of an alternative lifestyle that would be liberating to her. Through this medium of communication, Christina Maria envisions and subsequently draws a community of women living together in peace, forming household clusters of their own, thus discarding societal limitations that keep them trapped in patriarchal constructs. Her drawings are not only significant to the viewers due to their symbolic content, but they are also a clear indication that her creative and aesthetic endeavors are not in accordance with the claim of insanity. Moreover, they offer a subtly optimistic note towards the end, when the confinement of women in prison and the public bullying of Dr. Van der Boss clearly indicates that challenging patriarchy had been an arduous and unsuccessful endeavor, albeit a gratifying one. In these final moments it is crucial for the viewers to know that the vision that these women have fostered has not been depleted by patriarchal expectations of "sanity" and "order." As a result, their dissonant laughter as they descend the staircase to their confinement appears to be an ominous reminder to the judges concerning their profound lack of respect for patriarchal structures.

To conclude, *A Question of Silence*, as the title implies, encapsulates a feminist response to the social conditions that constitute feminine identity in postmodern, ostensibly liberal societies. By placing the narrative within a distinctively urban setting, Marleen Gorris manages to illustrate the tensions inherent in institutionalized realms that abide by the rules of patriarchy. Within these realms women occupy marginal positions, defined by oppression and disposability. The film protests the imposition of rigid patriarchal categories that render feminine approaches as borderline mentally unstable, and employs the protagonists' silence and laughter as a vehicle for the disruption of patriarchal rhetoric. Through the establishment of the contrast amongst language, silence, and laughter, Gorris envisages an alternative feminist discourse that would potentially afford women in postmodern cities the opportunity for freedom of expression and self-determination.

References

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I. At this point it is essential to note that by the term "feminine collective" I certainly do not intend to indicate the utopic notion of a solitary feminine community characterized by a common vision, nor do I assume an oversimplified stance towards the different needs and ideological preoccupations of feminists or women in general; however, I do intend to highlight the commonality of oppressive patriarchal conventions as an indubitable burden imposed on women within ostensibly liberal urban settings.