

Exploring the Effects of the Cinematographic Apparatus on Fifty Shades of Grey

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ABSTRACT

The current research utilizes Male Gaze theory which is postulated by Laura Mulvey on Fifty Shades of Grey who presents different aspects of a film in which all the viewers, spectators and a cameraman are all males. The male gaze occurs when the audience is put into the perspective of the heterosexual man. Women are considered as a paragon of attraction, sexual objects, and things. In this movie the female protagonist Anastasia is depicted just an object for billionaire Christine who uses her as his submissive slave by making her sign a contract in which she is completely under his sway. The focus and attention of the camera on Anastasia is quite elaborated. Anastasia was on full display in front of a camera whereas Christine was fully covered. It can be said that the movie humiliates women both emotionally and physically. Despite their intelligence and talent, media has always solely focused on their physical appearance and certain parts of their body. To gain the viewer's attention and to arouse the intimate emotions of the audience, women are projected as a model of sexual perfection and an ultimate paragon of sensuality. The research concludes that the positive image of women such as their intelligence, hard work, care and their contribution to human development are not highlighted with different separate identities of their own.

Keywords: Camera, Male Gaze, Female Form, Movements, Spectators

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INTRODUCTION

Women from all over the world have always remained a center of attraction in every field and especially for men. Whatever they do or wherever they go, they are usually visualized differently by different men. In the world of films, women are usually depicted as objects for the male gaze. As Juliana Starr in her essay Men Looking at Women Through Art (1993) describes several cases in a film theory, in which the male protagonist gazes upon a painting which portrays fully-clothed men gazing upon nude or semi-nude women who perform as a spectacle for both the spectator of the painting as well as the spectator within the painting. It shows the depiction of women in a film

world as an object to be viewed by men for their physical pleasure. In a film world, men hold the authority behind the camera, in the audience and in a work field. The term male gaze is also called “scopophilia” which means the sexual pleasure involved in looking. It can also be said that the camera repeatedly positions the audience to look at women’s bodies. Another thing about the representation of women in films are that if the male audience wants them to be presented or shown like that then women also accept this thing. They also remain passive in that condition. They do not say anything against their representation like that. Just to get the visual attention of the audience, men think of women as a source of visual pleasure.

Rather than film theory if the discussion is about the representation of women in society then it is also the same. Whenever any woman goes outside then people feel justified to think that women are there as eye candy for men. All the things on media which males observe and different perceptions about women when they see any commercial about them encourage them to observe and judge women’s bodies, whether in the movies, in advertising, in comics, or video games. In some cases, women have also been shown in completely inappropriate costumes and positions considering the context. Sometimes women are cut up to display only the most interesting parts. That’s called fragmentation. A term used to reduce any woman only to their specific body parts just to catch the attention of the viewers. The feeling of being observed has a negative impact on women in different places, fields, and most importantly on their self-confidence and intellectual capacities.

The Male Gaze theory is applied to the movie *Fifty Shades of Grey (part 1)* directed by E. L. James. This study shows a world in which a female remains subjugated in only a single common aspect and her submissive nature in front of a male. Christine Grey and Anastasia Steele are the two main protagonists in the movie. The way a camera shows the specific parts of her symbolizes the complete authority and power of a man in society. Moreover, man in a work field symbolizes the desire of a male to look at the particular parts of a woman, while a man in the audience symbolizes all the lustful behavior which men usually adopt by watching any nude female character in a movie. They fulfill their visual sexual desire by watching such an act of love making. Media shows and directs these kinds of movies only to arouse passionate emotions, feelings and sexual desires in the audience.

The study endeavors to address the following research questions;

- What is male gaze?
- What is objectification in the male gaze theory?
- What is the role of gaze in *Fifty Shades of Grey*?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the Hunch back of Notre Dom (1831), it can be obviously seen that while the main heroine Esmeralde was forcefully Taken to the wooden plank for execution then in spite of being sad aura everywhere, her physical chastity was especially focused, her legs, her hair have been described and her bare shoulders and Victor Hugo desperately wanted to hold her dress close to his teeth.

The existentialist philosopher Jean Paul Satre (1943) clarified another phenomenon regarding this gaze, he was of the opinion that When a person is being gazed at then it creates the feelings of Subjugated object which is only felt by the person being gazed at, this is another kind of submissive inferior feelings of being only a sexual object.

Griselda Pollock, one of the famous Analysts is usually of the opinion that Women have always been neglected in every field and so is their gaze too one of the famous example is *The Side Long Glance* (1948), that was the famous art gallery, and one of the couple visited this gallery. The couple was looking at the painting. The perspective of female gaze is different as compared to male gaze, now the wife perspective is completely different and she was talking to her husband, who was gazing at the painting of a nude woman, he was ignoring her comments, that shows the objectification of women in terms of gaze, According to the point of John Berger who was of the opinion that in a painting Her body of framework was organized in such a way to show herself in a display, now female's sexuality is nothing nor does she want to show her in such a way but she is only there to satisfy the sexual lust of men who want nothing but only this.

Another prominent writer such as Tannen (1990) and many others have presented the concept between "gaze" and "look". He said that gender inequality is not determined through the outside agents such as environmental, social, and cultural but it is determined through inherent nature such as biological. He said that look refers to the general term when a person usually looks at the thing but gaze refers to the specific way of looking at things with a particular purpose. It is usually connected to a patriarchal society.

Simone De Beauvoir (2009) one of the Known feminist in the world, has Presented another point of view regarding this gaze, she says that Women are usually considered as the oppressed gender, the object to be looked at and Always a submissive one, She is the creature who does not possess the power to react against all the negative misconceptions about herself, She cannot return the man the abusing way of looking at herself so in terms of a gaze she remains the "Other" while a man remains the "Self".

As Charu Gupta (2007) speaks in the favour of Women, she said that only women do not have the job to satisfy the sensual lust of men, a man can also be gazed at, a woman can also take the same advantage of a man, just because she is passive, does not mean that she is only left to fulfill some sort of physical and spiritual pleasure of a man. She has her own priorities, needs and demands, she is more strong than a man who just flaunts of his masculinity in a society. In the Essay "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" another person named Bell hooks Clarifies that A lady with black skin is usually neglected from every sort of fun and pleasure, she is not even considered a person, a human, again racism is still dominant in terms of Love making too, she is considered as inferior as compared to a white woman who has been considered as an ideal one for all men. So as far as laconian concept of Mirror stage is concerned, when a child begins to recognize itself, then it begins to search for black women instead of white women.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative analysis for the current study helps in studying the cinematic traditions that cannot be quantitatively grasped. The Theory that is being applied to this movie is *The Male Gaze* by Laura Mulvey. The present study analyzes it in theoretical framework of film. The movie upon which the research is going to be done is *Fifty Shades of Grey* (part 1). There are three basic categories of this theory such as a man behind the camera, a man in a work field, and man in the audience. The characteristics that were coded were face, whole body, eyes, chest, lips, navel, bareback, muscles, and legs. Mulvey describes that the gaze of a man at a woman in the work field is similar to the man in the audience and man behind the camera. She asserted the male actor in the film is the bearer of the look while the female is the image. Another important element is the

Fragmentation. In terms of fragmented body parts, the camera predominantly focused on the eyes, breasts, lips, navel, hips, bare backs, and legs of the female lead actors. Voyeuristic and fetishistic looking are the two major terms in this theory. By focusing on the body or sexual body parts, objectifying videos depict women as mere sexual instruments to serve the pleasure of the viewer.

Data Analysis

This part analyzes the movie *Fifty Shades of Grey* directed by E. L. James in (2015) accordance with the concept of *Male Gaze Theory* postulated by Laura Mulvey in her famous essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1945).

Male Gaze Theory

It is the heterosexual perspective of the male audience in which women are represented as sexual objects for the pleasure of male viewers only. The term was first used by Laura Mulvey in her famous essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* in (1973). At the very start of the movie both protagonists Anastasia and Christine are depicted quite differently. She is quite simple, honest, and humble and having romantic ideals about everything while Christine is quite powerful, confident and successful in his own business world. On their first meeting in his office, while taking his interview for college magazine, he was quite inquisitive about her, he was observing her from head to toe and while answering her questions, he became more interested in her and said “Tell me about yourself”. So, at that point he was passionate about her and liked her simplicity. But at the very beginning when she falls as soon as she enters his office, he raises her and literally he sees her from the bottom, it shows women’s inferiority in front of males. It also shows that in times of difficulty, only men are able to get women out of any situations. They want to take control over women in every way. Anastasia was wearing blue top and skirt and her legs were revealing. That’s how the female actresses are usually depicted in films just to catch the visual attention of male viewers while Christine was fully covered, wearing a straight man’s dress. On the next day when she was working her part time job at a hardware shop, he appears suddenly and while buying some things, again he was observing her and noticing her moves. It shows that he wanted to be around her. It shows self-objectification which is the result of objectification. There are three basic tools or elements of this theory and these are: man behind the camera, man in the audience and man in a work field. This movie is a beacon of women’s sexuality and it has also sparked debate over the ever-changing role of women in society.

Man behind the Camera

It is obvious that a man behind the camera has focused some erotic details of female protagonist. In one scene when Christine was taking Anastasia with him to Seattle in his helicopter, he was tugging a belt around her belly, the camera specially focused on her fragmented body, her particular body part (chest). It shows that the gaze of a camera is again “male”. Just to arouse the passionate and sexual emotions of the viewers, an angle of the camera just shows her personal body part. It has been deduced that women are always the source of center of attraction and they are catchy too. It also makes all the women to be objectified and in this case such erotic passions and emotions about them usually start to develop. At his apartment in Seattle both of them tends to involve in romantic relationship, now at that time while doing an act of love making, Anastasia’s entire body is on full display while Christine is usually covered up from the waist down. It again illustrates that the camera only wants to focus on the body parts of

a woman to trigger the sexual emotions of the viewers. In society where women are given second rate positions, in the same case they are considered as pleasurable objects from whom anyone can fulfill their sexual lust. They are capable only of this thing and nothing else. When it comes to clothing, again Christine dominates her while choosing and wearing clothes. She has always been shown in short dresses. These are the demanding of men while directing any film in which any female plays a role. The more a particular section of a woman is shown, the more they are considering as objects. When it comes to a contract about dominant and submissive in which Christine is dominant and Ana will be submissive, all the rules and regulations in that contract were only just for submissive about how she will behave, act, eat, sit and perform different activities. When it comes to clothing Christine has always been shown to be full dressed. On one hand it shows men's dominating power over women who are usually stripped off in front of a camera. Much of the film focuses on Anastasia's nudity instead of the mysterious Christine Grey, although he is rich and successful business man. The only people benefitting from this visual decision are straight men and no women. Awareness of male gaze is the first step to eliminate negative projections of women from society.

This male gaze also depends on color, clothing, proportion and pose etc. Whether consciously or not, this camera takes shots of women with less focus on their faces and more focus on their sexual parts of the body. The camera's gaze at that time was especially on her legs and hips directing the visual attention of the viewers. Women have to be beautiful, wearing short dresses which usually reveal their bodies in order to evoke the intimate sexual emotions and passions for them. Actually, the media is not responsible for this. The problem is with women; they just accept whatever they are said and demand to be. This movie is erotic and highly romantic just because of Anastasia and Christian's dominance of every kind on her. The gaze of the camera wants women to be seen in film like this. All men think, that is the only way to show the beauty of women. When Anastasia obeys him, he takes care of her in every way. When both of them were sitting at his office and was doing table talk, she still was wearing short clothes. The camera's angle focused on her legs and her facial expression, and her tight waist and back was quite visible. But on the other hand, Christine was wearing straight man's dress to show the power, influence, and dominance. Men are also physically beautiful and quite handsome but they are always shown in full dress. The gaze of the camera is focused in red room at Seattle when Anastasia was with Christine and both were involved in sexual pleasure.

Christine as he appears to be sadist was spanking her. Although, highly erotic it can be said that except the whole body of Anastasia, the camera only focused certain private parts of her body and that's the reason why women are considered only as sexual objects. Christine on the other hand always ties her with something while doing such activity. It creates strong sensual and passionate emotions, feelings in minds and hearts of the viewers. He does not allow her to touch him in the same way as he does to her. Certain examples are shown in this movie such as in the red room, he binds her hands with a rope, places the satin blindfold over her eyes to plunge her into darkness just to experience the sensual erotic feelings, all it shows submission and humiliation of women in accordance with their positions and status in society. She was fully naked in that scene, even her private body parts were quite visible including her legs, chest and other areas. So, this is how the angle of a camera showed or in other words, this is the way men want women to be represented like that in films.

Man in the Audience (as a Spectator)

All men are aware of this fact and they watch it as spectators. All the sexual scenes in this movie are not shown to arouse the eye but meant to instruct men and women on inventive and efficient ways to improve their sexual pleasures. This movie tells the audience especially males to adopt different methods for their sexual activities. People enjoy what they are shown. The disadvantage of showing such scenes is that people commit wrong and illegal acts such as rape etc. But it is not like that so the viewers easily avert their eyes to another point of interest. It is shown that all the spectators fondly see the scenes in which Anastasia is involved in sexual pleasure or when she is naked. It is because the camera focused entirely on her body for the pleasure of male viewers. It is the reason that men want women to behave like Anastasia in front of Christine. They want women to remain submissive before them and do, act what they are said and demand to be. In society where women do not have any stabilized status and they are considered as inferior, such type of movies made them to be more examined like lustful objects.

Objectification and Self Objectification of Women

Objectification means to look at another thing, person or any entity only as an “object” with no emotions, feelings, opinions and desires of its own. It makes a person whether it is a male or a female as an inferior one with no integrity and dignity. To some extent it is the fault of a woman to give permission to the patriarchal society to draw such a picture or conception about a woman, if a man assigns such role to a woman then she does not resist or denies but automatically she starts to adapt herself into that role, so women are also responsible for their humiliation in every field too, no one is here to stand against men in a society. If she starts to respect herself first and starts taking care of her dignity then nobody dares to behave like that or to present women only as sensual objects for the sexual lust of men. Of course everybody has emotions because they are not a robot devoid of any feelings and emotions but it should be guided in a proper way, women are far more capable and talented than their male counterparts because unfortunately Whether she is a Muslim or Christine, she is totally failed to recognize herself in her true eternal spirit. So in the movie Fifty Shades of Grey it is rightly admitted that Christine was doing wrong to Anastasia, but she too was like that, she too wants to be represented like that but on the other hand It can be said that This movie shows the humiliation of women both physically and spiritually and again in the scene of love making she was a kind of object and A slave because she was not allowed to do anything of her own, she was blindfolded, she was spanked and she was being tugged by Christine.

Before Meeting with Christine she was an independent girl having an innocent ideals of her own but after encountering Christine She wanted to be around her and begins to adapt herself according to be perceptions of him, He always Used to eulogize her physically and externally only , what does it mean? It means men only want beauty, obedience, properly dressed up only to arouse sensual and intimate feelings of a man or she is nothing and cannot fit in a society, she has no other role but this. He wished to see her in a revealing clothes having dreamy ideals and thoughts. Life is not like that, if he had truly loved her then He would not have bothered her to sign a contract of BDSM in which she is under his control. So in the end it can be said that Women have sublime place in our society, she gives birth, she brings new generation to the world, so should be respected in every matter not an object to be enjoyed at.

Man in a Work Field

This is the third important element of Male Gaze that Mulvey described in her essay. At one point it can be said that women hold dominant position because in a movie, the entire focus was on Anastasia, her moves, her features, her expressions, her dressing sense etc. Men in a work field have a similar gaze to the gaze of those two elements of the theory. They can also be called as spectators. They enjoy all the scenes as spectators in the audience do. Again, all the persons in a work field are only men and no women. It introduces another term called scopophilia.

Scopophilia

In the fields of psychology, the term scopophilia means sexual pleasure derived chiefly from watching others when they are naked or engaged in sexual activity. Mulvey refers to scopophilia as the pleasure involved in looking at other people's bodies as objects without being seen either by those on screen or by other members of the audience. Anastasia Steele was an erotic object for both the spectators and men in a work field too. On the other hand, women also take pleasure in other women's objectification on screen by taking on the heterosexual 'male' gaze. When Ana awakens in Christine's hotel room hangover from the night before, he gives her an insight into his 'singular' tastes. He states, 'I don't make love. I fuck hard', and 'I don't do the girlfriend thing'. It can be seen that Christine takes Ana only as an object of sexual pleasure. In all acts of love making in a movie, men in a work field simply were gazing at their sexual activity. It again humiliates a woman in front of a male who has no other desire than look at any woman lovingly and pleasurably. Men who were present in a work field nearly enjoyed all the scenes as spectators in the audience do so in that case, they too have objectified gaze on women especially on the main protagonist Anastasia who was submissive and an object for Christine.

Fragmentation

Fragmentation is a result of objectification. It means to reduce a person to particular body parts, to focus on an erotic detail of body of a woman. In the whole scene she was fragmented, highly erotic to evoke the intense feelings of both the viewers as well as Christine. Christian is attracted towards Anastasia only when she wears short clothes, or the viewer's sensual desires are only triggered when she was shown as being fragmented. It is all because of the camera and media have the authority to represent women according to its own desires and will. In a society, the beauty of a woman is taken advantage rather than by the intelligence of a woman. Just as Anastasia, she was both physically and psychologically abused by Christine and was mere reduced to a thing. Her beauty was important for him, moreover, when she was agreed to become a submissive in front of him, he was so proud of his wealth, power and luxurious life style. He wanted to run everybody according to his own wishes, but it is not always like that. At the end Anastasia changed him completely because he realized that there is no greater and precious thing as love in this very world. He had to change his perspective about love making and just taken the advantage from the beauty of a woman but to love her purely and without satisfying his lust for only physical love.

CONCLUSION

In this movie *Fifty Shades of Grey (part 1)* man behind a camera shows the body of a female protagonist Anastasia as something to be looked at and enjoyed. She is definitely an ideal lady for all those men who want all the women to behave, represent and act like her. Obviously, the camera is controlled by a man who shows her in such a way to

arouse the intimate feelings of the viewers. Similarly, a man in the audience is perfectly content by watching such an erotic movie. This movie is a paragon for all the sexual lust of men. Anastasia provides all the physical needs that men usually demand. It can be said that this kind of movie has a negative effect on the minds of men. This movie provides catharsis to all men who cannot do such kind of love making in their real life. Similarly, a man in the work field performs the same role as a man in the audience. They usually satisfy themselves by watching Anastasia and Christine engaged in love making. It is a patriarchal society and it is seen in the movie. Likewise, Anastasia's body is also fragmented e. g in the scene of helicopter, apart from her whole body, her chest is especially focused when Christine tugs a belt around her.

Her legs are focused upon when both were busy in their conversation at glass conference table. Her back is shown when she wears short clothes. Her neck is foregrounded when she is involved in love making with Christine. Moreover, voyeuristic looking is constantly being seen in a movie. In all acts of love making, male viewers are totally absorbed in their own fantasies imagining Anastasia as their partner and consider themselves in place of Christine. Voyeuristic look controls the gaze of a man. It is highly erotic. It can be said that that this look also controls the mind of a man. Not only men but females also idealize their personalities like Anastasia. They too begin to imagine themselves in place of Anastasia. Whereas fetishistic look focuses on some erotic details of the body of a woman. Fetishistic looking is an intense sexual attraction to either an inanimate object or to body parts. In such case a person wants to fulfill his or her sexual lust from anyone or anything. So, in the end it can be said that "male gaze" is at work in this movie. Apart from that, this gaze is also present in the society as well. It is the society that gives the role to a woman. Her presentation, her behavior, her actions, her roles all are determined and decided by the society.

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