

REPRESENTATION OF JEALOUSY IN SHORT MOVIE “THE NEIGHBORS’ WINDOW”

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Abstract

Short films are often underestimated for their lack of duration. People think that the short duration will affect to how the messages are conveyed. However, short films are now very popular. There is even a category of best short film in Academy Awards, or well-known as Oscars. *The Neighbors’ Window* is one of many Oscars’ winners for best short film. This research aims to find out how jealousy is represented in the short film *The Neighbors’ Window* by Marshall Curry. This method of this research uses a theory from Saussure called semiotics. This research also uses an approach of Representation theory by Mary Beltran and Stuart Hall. Most of the data in this article is taken from scenes in the short film which later are connected with the theories. This result of this research shows that the important scenes presented in this movie are representation of Jealousy towards each character. This research shows that the movie is about jealousy presented by the symbols in the movie using some analytical research by applying the two theories.

Keywords: Academy Awards, Film, Oscars, Short Film, The Neighbors’ Window

1. INTRODUCTION

In the early days of filmmaking, the word "short film" was invented in the Indian film industry and embraced by the North American film industry. The description is now used almost interchangeably with short subject. A short film will tell the same story as a full-length feature film in a fraction of the time. It is distinguished by the director's reflection on the present social, political, and economic circumstances. A short film story is one that can be quickly created by people from all walks of life and can be used by anyone. It encourages directors working on a small budget to tell their tales to the rest of the world. The expertise in producing a short film is in

expressing the film's message to the viewer in a short amount of time. In a short film, transitions are incredibly necessary.

Film has also developed into a powerful communication media. Various kinds of messages can be presented well in a film. Films can have an impact on the audience, this impact can be positive or negative, depending on how the audience absorbs and watches a film. Apart from being seen as a reflection of life, film is also considered a good medium to represent the reality of people's lives. The realities of people's lives are many and varied.

Cinema is one of the few mediums that has succeeded in portraying the

actual truth of culture and our lives in particular. It portrays the various realities that one is presented by, much as other art styles. It delves into one of the most neglected and eternal realities that any person faces: loneliness. Despite belonging to organized cultures, each person yearns for social ties; it is what each of us is eventually reduced to.

One kind of the depictions of reality through film is social reality, such as jealousy. Jealousy is a complex feeling. In certain respects, it resembles envy and is often associated with it. When a person sees a threat to what they have, or even what they want, they feel jealous. Remember Shakespeare's well-known play "Othello." When the title character suspects another man has gained his wife's attention, he becomes enraged. He wants all of her love for himself and murders her in a jealous rage, finding betrayal when none was. Of course, this is a case of extreme jealousy. Not all case leads to death. Jealousy of a parent's affection, on the other hand, can lead to sibling rivalry. Jealousy over a coworker's progress will lead to competitive backstabbing. If not controlled, jealousy, which is rooted in both fear and rage, may have dangerous consequences. What the writers are trying to say is that jealousy will affect to someone's behavior, whether it is significant or not, and in this case (the short movie *The Neighbors' Window*), being jealous towards another couple can lead to serious behavior in life.

For people in intimate relationships, jealousy has serious and far-reaching effects. As a consequence, it's vital to comprehend the roles, causes, and consequences that exist as a result of romantic jealousy. Some scholars, for example, consider romantic envy to be a positive experience (Andersen et al., 1995),

referencing the shown connections with relationship satisfaction (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Stam et al., 1992). Yet jealousy also has the ability to negatively affect an intimate relationship (Bevan, 2008). Many scholars state that jealousy occurs because people are worried about the likelihood of relationship failure (Harmon-Jones et al., 2009). In addition, Orvis, Kelley & Butler figured out that out-of-relationship behaviors triggered the largest rate of attributional conflict in young couples (Orvis et al., 1976). These attributions will carry the future for the continuity of the relationship. Even though movies belong to popular culture and they seem produced for commercial and entertainment reasons only, everything is not like what it seems.

The word "representation" is incredibly general. In literature, representation has its own meaning and it will be discussed in the literature review below by using the theory of representation from Mary Beltran and Stuart Hall. In general, it appears in a number of sectors, occupations, and domains; it appears on the news; and it also appears in daily conversations. As a consequence, it should be a well-known word that everyone will recognize. A simple browse of every dictionary, or the internet, will generate a variety of meanings for representation. Some are ethnographic or anthropological in nature, exploring how people from diverse cultures create significance and attach importance. The word has many different complexities and applications since it is used in psychology and philosophy, film and literature studies, media and communication, art and visual.

However, representation is discussed in most of these contexts as a means of conveying the fundamental

meanings of texts. Women's representation in films, for example, can be translated to convey both the filmmaker's stance toward women and the general way women are perceived, recognized, or identified in a given sense, the context in which the film was made and released. How a person represents their personal history or emotions shows details about their psychological well-being, or how they make sense of the world, how their brains operate and how they comprehend themselves and their surroundings. The concept refers to the process by which an agent stands in for, or serves a community or a client in political and legal contexts.

The film *The Neighbors' Window* is a unique short film. Despite the small number of casts and minimum dialogue, this film succeeds to display the narrative and visuals perfectly and also is easy to understand. The film *The Neighbors' Window* is not the only film to include the jealousy concept. In 2019, the film *Parasite* represented how jealousy towards social and economic class differences that significantly affected their way of life. *Parasite* tells the story of the social inequality between rich and poor families, causing a big conflict that ends tragically. The story of this film by director Bong Joo Hoo starts with a family who lives in a semi basement house that is dirty and damp. They are the Kim family, father Kim Ti Taek (Song Kang Ho), mother Choong Sook (Jang Hye Jin), son Ki Woo (Choi Wo Sik) and daughter Ki Jung (Park So Dam). Once upon a time, Ki Woo's friend offers a job to become an English teacher for a girl named Da Hye (Jung Ji So). Armed with a fake diploma, Ki Woo becomes an English teacher for Da Hye, the son of a rich family, Park Dong Ik (Lee Sun Kyun). Together with his younger brother Ki

Jung, Ki Woo also plans so that all of his family can work at Park Dong Ik's house. They are finally able to work in one house, Ki Woo as an English teacher, Ki Jung an art teacher, his father is a private driver and his mother is a household assistant. Kim's life grew like a parasite on the Park family. But Park Dong Ik's family doesn't realize that his child's teachers, driver, and housekeeper are one family.

What distinguishes the film *The Neighbor's Window* from *Parasite* is the flow. The film *The Neighbor's Window* and the *Parasite* film have the same genre of drama, while the *Parasite* film has the genre of drama, thriller. Both films have different movie categories. *The Neighbor's Window* is a short film, and *Parasite* is a feature film. What the two films have in common is that they both have an implicit message, namely they both want to rise how different kinds of people can manage their jealousy towards other parties. Even though they both have the theme of jealousy, the film *The Neighbor's Window*, which has a drama genre, has a simpler but complicated scene at the same time because what makes it different is that simplicity brings the story but is perfectly executed in the film.

The Neighbors' Window is a 2019 American short film written and directed by Marshall Curry. It won the Academy Award for Best Live Action Short Film in 2020. Winning an Academy Awards and having a lot of viewers and discussion rooms make this short film is worth analyzing. It is short, simple yet complicated, it tells us a unique story of jealousy, it's easily accessible, and also it is the winner of the Academy Award for Best Live Action Short Film in 2020. From the elaboration of the introduction that has been described, the author formulates

the following research question: "How is the Representation of Jealousy in the Short Film *The Neighbor's Window*?"

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Jealousy

Hart and Legerstee stated that jealousy is a state which – depending on the context – can arouse emotions like sadness (loss), anger (treason), or fear or anxiety (loneliness) (Hart & Legerstee, 2013). Domina Petric states that jealousy generally refers to the thoughts or feelings of insecurity, fear, concern, over relative lack of possessions, status or something of great personal value, particularly in reference to a comparator, a rival, or a competitor (Petric, 2019). He also added that Jealousy can consist of one or more emotions such as anger, resentment, inadequacy, helplessness or disgust. He also claimed that a jealous person believes he or she has a valuable relationship but is in danger of losing it or having it altered in an unfavorable way, whereas an envious person believes he or she does not have a valuable commodity but wishes to have it.

Romantic jealousy is a natural reaction to romantic attraction. It's defined as a set of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that occur in response to threats to one's self-esteem and/or the existence or quality of one's relationship, when those threats are triggered by the perception of a real or potential romantic attraction between one's partner and a (possibly imaginary) rival (White, 1981, as cited in Petric, 2019). Fear of loss, suspicion of or anger about a perceived betrayal, low self-esteem and sadness over perceived loss, uncertainty and loneliness, fear of losing an important person to another, and distrust are all common feelings associated with jealousy for many

people. Jealousy can be a healthy emotion linked to love and caring for someone or something, but it can also be a pathological emotion if it is obsessional or delusional.

Some scholars stated that romantic jealousy is associated with more insecure and anxious attachments (Miller et al., 2014), low self-esteem and insecurity (DiBello et al., 2014) and higher levels of romantic love (Swami et al., 2012).

2.2 Representation Theory

According to Mary Beltran, A representation is a visual, written, or audio depiction of something or someone (Beltrán, 2018). This term also refers broadly to what images and texts mean, the meanings that they potentially convey, and how they come to take on those meanings. With respect to the focus of this volume, Beltran adds that representation refers to the meanings associated with mediated images and nar-ratives, such as television episodes, films, and music videos. Movie or also known as Film is a series of moving pictures (images) recorded with sound that tells a story, while Representation is a process of exchanging meanings produced in a particular cultural member who involves the use of language, images, and signs that stand to represent these various categories (Hall 1997, as cited in (Sari, 2015). This means that a single scene of film can represent a lot of meaning. It can be from the images and audio.

Brian Curtin on his book *Semiotics and Visual Representation* stated that given the root of 'representation' in notions of resemblance and imitation, among other factors, visual images have often been thought of as more direct and straightforward in their meaning than language itself, which varies from culture to culture (Curtin, 2009). Or, in

other words, there has been a strong tendency to think of visual images as not a language, as un-coded and possibly universal in their meaning. Based on this definition, this study will focus on describing visual and audio symbols that represent social jealousy from short movie The Neighbors Window.

2.3 Film Semiotics

Film semiotics refers to the analysis of signs within the medium that are intended to be perceived and interpreted by the audience. This study was first developed by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 - 1913). He defined it as “a science that studies the life of signs within society. Early semioticians such as Ricciotto Canudo, Vachel Lindsay, and Béla Balázs have likened the subject of semiotics to linguistics. Lindsay even compared it to hieroglyphics. Upon breaking down semiotics, a notable example of it that can be found is the concept of denotation and connotation. Simply, what the audience can perceive on the surface level, and what the audience can interpret out of what they perceive. Thus the approach to analyzing this film is using the semiotic approach by Saussure to find out the representation in the movie and see what each scene represents.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the data is taken from scenes in The Neighbors' Window. To analyze how jealousy is represented from the scenes, researchers use representation theory to interpret the message. In order to fully understand the message that will be delivered in a cinematic way, researchers will be using the semiotics analysis method. The method used in this research is qualitative method. First, researchers

watch the movie and take notes of some important and detailed scenes. Next, the research analyze the scenes and categorize which scenes are qualified as symbols or signs which later in the next step the researchers use the Film semiotics to determine what those signs and symbols represent. The step in using semiotics to interpret the data based on Saussure is to look for the meaning of denotation from signified and signifier. Researchers look for the connotative meaning of the determined denotative meaning, to find out the myths or representations of the depictions of jealousy in the data. Therefore, only by then can we know what the scenes represent in the movie The Neighbors' Window.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following are scenes or shots that represent social jealousy. Some of these shots or scenes do not represent jealousy directly but the scene or shot must be attached because the scene or shot contains clues that will lead the audience to the social jealousy that happened to Jacob and Alli in minute 02:52.



Source:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1vCrsZ80M4>

Both Jacob and Alli stare at their neighbor's window and see that there is a couple being naked and doing sexual intercourse.

“She’s flexible.” said Jacob to Alli.

“You know, he’s really hot too,” said Alli to Jacob.

Then, Jacob replied assertedly, “I didn’t say hot. I said flexible.”

The assertiveness that Jacob does to Alli signals that Jacob felt insulted by Alli by saying the male neighbor is “hot” and felt jealous towards how Alli saw the male neighbor. Based on Saussure’s theory, the signifier sign in this scene is a verbal sign which is Alli and Jacob’s dialogue. Those signs signify jealousy. Self-evaluation and self-awareness are vital in social relationships, and may be mediated by the opinion others hold about one (Martínez-León et al., 2018). It is assumed that individuals with low self-esteem are more vulnerable to the experience of jealousy. In minute 07:14, social jealousy is represented visually and the use of utterances that signified Jacob state of low confidence in the dialog.



Source:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1vCrsZ80M4>

"Why are you working out here?" said Alli to Jacob.

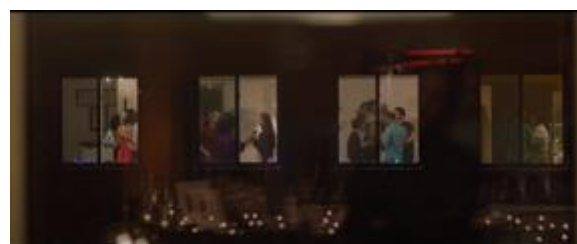
"Just the ... Skype's signals are better" Jacob replied.

Are your 'friends' home?" said Alli to Jacob sarcastically.

The word 'friend' refers to a young couple who was seen having sex the night before which caused a bit of a fight between Alli and Jacob that night. Alli pointed out that Jacob was deliberately doing his job near the window that was facing directly towards that young couple. There is a simple detail or message that the director built in scene of the film. Jacob is seen wearing a green t-shirt while Alli is wearing a red t-shirt, which both symbolize envy and jealousy.

Americans associated envy and jealousy with black, green, and red, but for the Russians it was black, purple, and yellow. (Hupka et al., 1997). Based on Saussure’s theory, the signifiers in this scene are the dialogue and the colors, both signify jealousy.

In this next scene, jealousy is represented through Alli’s dialogue which she conveyed sarcastically and through colors usage as seen in minute 07:59.



Source:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1vCrsZ80M4>

You can see a woman (Alli) in the reflection of the window pane looking closely at the window of a neighbor's apartment where they are having a party. Alli is alone with her baby decorating their apartment for Christmas Eve. She is distracted with the view other young neighbor having a great Christmas Eve party. There is also a sigh in her breathe as to indicate that she envy them. In this scene, Alli is wearing a black shirt which again the representation of Jealousy. Based on Saussure’s theory, the signifier sign in this scene is the reflection of Alli on her window. It signifies the loneliness and the jealousy felt by Alli.

In the next scene in minute 08:31, Jacob enters the room and exits again while slamming the door. We can see him out of focus in the background but the lighting-wise was focused on him. The picture above shows Alli is watching and paying attention to her neighbor using binoculars. The camera focus emphasizes how much Alli is in

her own world observing her neighbor, with the presence of Jacob simply standing behind her. The lighting focusing on Jacob brings the audience's attention to him.



Source:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1vCrsZ80M4>

Based on Saussure's signifier and signified, in this scene, the signifier sign is the sound of the door slamming. Signified is a 'concept' so slamming the door here is signified as a concept of anger and jealousy. He is jealous and also angry with the notion that her wife is very obsessed with the life of their neighbor. Instead of giving attention to her husband and their marriage life, she is too busy envying their neighbor's life, and that makes Jacob becomes jealous and upset.

For the last scene, the display of both family turns upside down. Knowing that the husband of Alli's neighbor just passed away, she shows her sympathy towards the wife.



Source:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1vCrsZ80M4>

In this scene, Alli visits her neighbor to find out what happened to the husband. Her neighbor as seen in the picture tells Alli that her husband died of cancer. She also adds that her husband and she are jealous of Alli's family. It turns out

that Alli's Neighbor also sees Alli's family from their room oftenly. She then reveals that she and her husband often look over and see Alli and Jacob's kids by saying that the kids are so adorable. Based on Saussure, The jealousy in this scene is represented through Alli's Neighbor dialogue by saying that her husband is sick and they haven't got kids yet. That line signifies sadness and jealousy. In this scene we can also see the plot twist and the hidden message of this movie. The young couple that the Alli's family are jealous of turns out to be the one who also gets jealous to Alli's family. This implies that sometimes, we should be grateful for what we have because what we do not realize we have might be something that others want.

5. CONCLUSION

In this film, the director used semiotics based on Saussure's theory to represent jealousy. The director uses 'signifier' which is interpreted as material form or something that can be seen, heard, or touched. By then the audience is able to digest the concept behind these symbols, which is jealousy. In a conclusion, jealousy can be seen through Alli's and her husband's reaction towards the happy and youthful spirit of their neighbor. It can be seen from how often they talk about the couple not stopping from having sex. Moreover, Alli is so obsessed and jealous of the neighbor's private life by always observing them through the window. However, the jealousy does not only come from Alli's family, but from the neighbor as well. Turns out, the director wants to give a message that people should always feel grateful for what they have, and not feel jealous of what they do not have. The director wants to imply that what we feel less in us may be wanted by someone else.

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