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## Male Gaze the Role of Women in the Wedding Agreement Film: Case Study of Feminism Paradigm

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### **Abstract:**

*Women and objectification are two things that cannot be separated. The use of women's bodies in films can be a form of unilateral commodification of the aesthetics of the female body and the objectification of women as a whole, especially in films that still keep the 'male gaze' phenomenon. The use of 'Male Gaze' etiquette in the film, if viewed from the feminism paradigm, is certainly not appropriate. Film etiquette from a male perspective will give birth to a visual paradigm governed by voyeurism and the objectification of one-sided patriarchal desires. The literacy study method with a feminist approach will be used to examine the recordings of women's footprints as passive objects related to the acceptance of male audiences' sexual satisfaction in the film from Indonesia, namely 'Agreement'. The film Wedding Agreement is one of the series with the theme of matchmaking, where the main character, the girl, must struggle to serve her husband while keeping the household from the temptation of infidelity. The strong side of girls' struggle amid social burdens is a real phenomenon in many cases of marriage in Indonesia which is also reflected in the film Wedding Agreement. Through literacy studies, the researcher tried to uncover the condition of the low level of education regarding the issue of feminism and the high level of patriarchal culture as two fatal combinations in Indonesian society. The end result is reaching a solution to the problem.*

**Keywords:** Male gaze, paradigm feminism, literacy studies, film wedding agreement

### **1. Introduction**

Art, aesthetics, and culture have become goods that are traded, become commodities, and enter the industry. Aesthetics are no longer free goods that can reflect the thoughts of the perpetrators but have become standardized commodities entering the cultural industry (Adorno, 1997:127). Besides being firmly established in each individual human being, aesthetics has also been transformed into the commercial area. Among them are soap operas, commercials, stage shows, songs to film series. Everything, including aesthetics, which has been transformed into entertainment media, of course, has a larger area of distribution to influence a society's state of mind.

One of the entertainment media that contains aesthetics and is most loved by the public is film. Through watching films, there are many meanings that the audience can obtain. The mandate or meaning of cultivating a slick visual film, the development of the social conditions of the people who are appointed, and the aesthetic beauty of the actors are very interesting to understand. Film can also be one of the entertainment media that has a huge place in people's hearts because of its long creative process and a reflection of existing social conditions.

Matlin said that creativity is a creative thinking process to get 'the light of a light bulb above his head' (Tomo, 2011: 7). Then Supriadi (1994) (in Rachmawati, 2011: 13) states that creativity is a person's expertise in giving birth to new different forms, whether in the form of ideas, ideas, or real works from previous works. Therefore, creativity in films can always create fresh new ideas.

In addition to aesthetics, in order to form an entertainment media that attracts the attention of the community owner, producers tend to use social facts that become massive phenomena. The use of phenomena and facts happening in society is the same as uncovering controversies as a medium of education and entertainment. Stuart Hall in Yuyun asserts that the media is the main cultural and ideological force that stands in a dominant position by paying attention to how social relations and political issues are defined and produced and transformed from popular ideologies that are considered by the audience (Yuyun Surya, Vol. 6 No.1 April 2005).

Referring to this idea, it can be concluded that the mass media shows a role in presenting the reality that exists in society. This includes raising sensitive issues such as women's struggles in the domestic sphere. Domestic issues, cases of

violence, infidelity, domination of power, and workload on women are still one of the interesting themes to be brought to the big screen. This is analyzed as a form of response to the many cases that are still mushrooming in the community.

Marriage in Indonesia is one of the sacred cultures and is often considered sacred to be carried out by all religious people. Indonesia has a culture of social demands in the form of marriage, which the law seems to be obligatory to do. These demands have become a hereditary legacy rooted in various regions. So many couples tend to stick to the boundaries of conventional love set by society without actively exploring and consciously making their own choices.

Data from the Central Statistics Agency in 2010 even showed that 89.3% of couples in Indonesia married endogamously. The social demands that burden the Indonesian people, especially women, are still a prolonged phenomenon. Women who always get the label 'Old Virgin' if not married at a young age can give birth to one-sided marriages. As a result of not being ready to take a more serious step, many married couples in Indonesia experience problems caused by fundamental reasons such as incompatible views of life or ongoing arguments.

Looking at the possibility of cases of psychological violence arising from a one-sided marriage, it can still not erase this phenomenon. Cases of unilateral matchmaking are still common in Indonesia, under the pretext of good family relations, parental ego, breaking the chain of poverty to following customs as reflected in the film *Wedding Agreement*.

Forced marriage or matchmaking is actually regulated in the marriage regulations in Indonesia, namely the 1974 Marriage Law Chapter 2 concerning the terms of marriage. Especially in article 6 paragraph (1), which reads 'Marriage must be based on the approval of the two prospective brides'. Referring to this article shares the knowledge that the law also does not support forced marriage as stipulated in the marriage law. A *sakinah* family, based on mutual liking and approval of the two prospective brides, minimizes the possibility of marriage.

## 2. Research Methods

The method used in the analysis of the male gaze case in the film *Wedding Agreement* is through a literature study with a descriptive qualitative approach. Descriptive analysis is a method used by analyzing and describing data to describe the state of the object under study to get an objective and complete picture of the analyzed data, which is the center of research attention (Ratna, 2013). Qualitative research is research that is important to understand a social phenomenon and the perspective of the individual being studied. The main purpose of qualitative research is to describe, study, and explain the phenomena that are the subject of the discussion.

Qualitative research can reveal findings that quantitative methods cannot read. Qualitative-based research can produce findings not obtained by statistical procedures or other quantification tools. With the help of a literature study, the qualitative descriptive analysis method is suitable for research on life, history, behavior, a person's behavior, or interactional relationships. Patton asserts that qualitative data is what people say to a set of questions by the researcher (Ratna, 2013; cf. Endraswara, 2015).

The study of film works is most suitable to use qualitative research. This needs to be understood because the film contains words and symbols full of meaning that can be described. The workings of the Literature Study method as a tool in this qualitative descriptive approach focus on the clarity of reading the data in the text. The Literature Study Method is also useful for reading and analyzing data on the irony of dehumanization culture and the male gaze contained in the film *Wedding Agreement*. The literature method and feminism theory are also used to dissect the objectification of women's roles. The firm point of this theory is that the film is a mirror and portrait of social reality. The assumption is that what is told in a film is the life experience of an author.

The analysis in this study tries to bring paradigmatic feminism closer to reality as an academic confirmation, and after that, it provides a new perspective as a solution. The data from this study were obtained from watching repeatedly and understanding the contents of the film *Wedding Agreement*. The film contains so many stories, pictures, and scenes that show the dehumanization of women. All the data obtained were looked at with the basic concepts of paradigmatic feminism to form a transcript. Transcription is done in full to produce natural data. This study aims to describe:

- The relationship between the male gaze in cases of bullying,
- The role of women in the family that appears in the film
- The influence of workload inequality between women and men in social strata, and
- How the male gaze can affect the psychology and position of women in general

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Phenomenon of Matchmaking and Infidelity in Wedding Agreements: Women's Struggle in the Family Area

Creating a film is certainly not easy because, under certain conditions, the people behind the screen must play a crucial role in producing the film. The difficulty of making a film means that every team involved must have the same balanced vision and mission. This is because producers, scriptwriters, actors, crew, and directors can direct their views, ideals, and goals for films made to meet market needs and desires. However, the vision and mission of a film made by a team itself can produce a lot of values that are often not in accordance with the social perspective desired by all parties.

These values include moral values, spiritual satisfaction, and the understanding of the local culture of a region to the values of feminism which continue to roll as a problem in Indonesia. The Indonesian state to this day is still struggling with the struggle to create equality of conditions for both women and men, without cornering one condition only. This desire by various parties is tried to be embodied in many parties, one of which is in the *Wedding Agreement* film series.

In cinema, to this day, the male gaze or the male gaze is still there and dominant. Therefore, a new perspective is urgently needed to enrich views and reduce patriarchal concepts that corner women. The themes prone to male gaze views

are infidelity, domestic relations, and women's struggles in the family area, which need special study. In addition, women are often constructed as soft, weak, obedient, and beautiful creatures synonymous with beauty. Although all things that are weak and seem soft are always associated with women, men have contributed to reconstructing this view.

The discourse of beauty and femininity cannot be separated from the construction of a patriarchal culture that empowers men to give recognition to women's femininity on the one hand and empowers women to always seek recognition of their femininity from men on the other (Prabasmoro, 2003:54).

Finally, based on the results of community construction, what is displayed by women is often associated with their bodies. As a result of this construction, women also have various limitations in the realm of work, household management, and the life choices they make.

Talking about heterosexual relationships between men and women is never free from problems that can then be raised in films. The film 'Wedding Agreement' tells the story of a household involved in a love triangle. The love story occurs when Bian's (Refal Hady) and his girlfriend, Sarah (Susan Sameh) relationship, which has been going on for a long time, is not approved by Bian's parents.

Instead of being able to fight to marry his dream lover, Bian is betrothed to Tari (Indah Permatasari), a young, religious woman. Since they married on the basis of an arranged marriage, Bian asked Tari to sign a contract agreement. The content of the agreement is that they will divorce after a year of marriage. Tari, who actually has an interest in Bian, can only surrender and obey her husband's wishes. Although in her heart, Tari wants to maintain her household with Bian.

However, Bian's attitude, which continues to be close to his ex-lover Sarah, makes their marriage relationship never go up the ladder. The two have never been involved in a romantic and communicative relationship like a husband and wife. Bian, who loves Sarah so much, even promised to marry Sarah when they were officially divorced. In the marriage that came from an arranged marriage, Tari never received Bian's sweet attitude, both physically and psychologically. Bian's attitude was only indifferent, and continued to defend Sarah to corner Tari.

It can be understood that in the story of the 'Wedding Agreement', it is not only Bian who experiences the moral burden of matchmaking but also Tari. Although in the end, the figure of Tari here seems to be the suspect who made Bian and Sarah's love story run aground. However, it was also Tari who then had to struggle to maintain his household with Bian, who had only been running for a long time. Tari's various approaches, both physically and psychologically, are certainly not easy. However, Bian's cold attitude is tantamount to bullying Tari's position as a wife.

In the midst of an effort to maintain his household, Tari still has to be faced with a case of blatant infidelity by Bian. In the story of 'Wedding Agreement', Tari finally filed for divorce to facilitate Bian and Sarah's relationship. However, finally, Bian seemed to realize his mistake and chose to maintain his household with Tari. The point of change seemed to be a breath of fresh air. Bian and Tari then reconciled and promised to start a domestic relationship based on love. Finally, the story arrived at the condition of Tari being pregnant with Bian's child. The happiness, that was just as old as the corn, began to waver again when Bian was still secretly close and helped Sarah a lot.

If you look at these conditions, the figure of Tari seems to be described as a weak woman who loves marriage and her husband so much. Meanwhile, in marriage, it is not only women who have to make the situation calm, but the role of men as head of the household is also very necessary. Moreover, in their relationship, an affair has occurred, which has resulted in Tari's mental state being disturbed,

According to psychological data, infidelity has become one of the factors that cause cracks in a relationship and ultimately lead to divorce.

Infidelity is a violation committed by someone who already has a partner against the norms that regulate the level of emotional or physical intimacy with people outside of their relationship with the partner. Anyone, including women, can do this behavior, although its prevalence shows that men are more likely to be perpetrators of infidelity.

Infidelity is the most frequently reported reason and the strongest predictor of divorce for married people (Scott et al., 2013). In addition to being a factor causing divorce, infidelity also increases depression and affects the mental health of someone who is a victim (Cano & Leary, 2014). In particular, partners who are cheated on in the relationship often experience various emotional and psychological stresses after infidelity, such as depression, anxiety, decreased self-confidence and sexuality, and decreased self-esteem (Bird et al., 2007; Fife et al., 2013). Infidelity is one of the events that is considered sad and has a damaging effect, and is one of the most difficult problems to deal with in the therapeutic process (Shrout & Weigel, 2018). The significant influence on mental health makes this topic need to be studied in more detail based on its type, causes, relation to biological processes, and the influence of gender.

Individuals who are victims of infidelity, especially women, will have feelings of betrayal, humiliation, and shame. So they require clinical intervention if their health deteriorates. In addition to the impact that occurs on victims of infidelity, several studies also reveal the impact of infidelity on perpetrators. Based on some of the explanations above, infidelity is an event that has a negative and traumatic impact on a person's psychology, both the disloyalty of the victim and the perpetrator of the affair.

Therefore, a line of thought can be drawn that arranged marriages and forced marriages can trigger a lot of negative things in the household realm. The primary and first concerns are family harmony and communication. After that, the possibility of infidelity, physical violence, neglect of economic needs to the alienation of children from forced marriages. This kind of case will only give birth to trauma and wounds for women, thus creating a weak stigma on women, regardless of the triggers.

### 3.2. Gender Equality in Facing the Male Gaze Phenomenon in Indonesian Entertainment Media

We are talking about the phenomenon of the male gaze in Indonesia, which is widespread in entertainment media, especially films. Of course, it is directly proportional to the issue of gender equality which is still minimal. Referring to the information provided by the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA), Ibu I Gusti Ayu Bintang Puspayoga said that the level of gender equality in Indonesia is still low. The low level of gender equality in Indonesia is even reflected in the gender equality index released by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Indonesia is ranked 103 out of 162 countries or the third lowest in ASEAN regarding handling gender justice issues. As for referring to other data, such as the Gender Development Index (IPG) in Indonesia, as of 2018, it was at 90.99. Then, the Gender Empowerment Index (IDG) is at 72.1.

The low level of gender empowerment in Indonesia is seen in the reality on the ground that women are still lagging behind men in the fields of education, health, economy, tourism, social and political representation. If referring to the feminism paradigm, good gender equality will directly impact the target of development equality, both on a micro and macro scale. Gender equality must be a development discourse that is taken into account so that even women and men can get an equal burden and reduce cases of threats of social and domestic violence.

However, the complexity of realizing gender equality in Indonesia is always related to the inequality of access to control participation and the opportunity to benefit between women and men. This is one of them triggered by patriarchal values and social construction in society that have been passed down from generation to generation. In the context of the film itself, the proliferation of the male gaze phenomenon occurs because men's role is too superior. In fact,

- It is mostly men who write the movies we watch,
- It is mostly men who make those movies, and
- It is usually men who are the target audience.

Therefore, the male character is usually given the main role in the story itself. In contrast, the female character is given a limited function to serve the purpose of the male protagonist. We know that the male gaze objectifies female characters. However, more importantly, the male gaze also reaffirms the power of the patriarchy to use women as a buffer in serving the narrative of heterosexual men.

The visualization establishes male-dominated and female-dominated roles by representing women as passive objects for male gazes from active viewers. The social pairing of the passive object (female) and active audience (male) is the functional basis of patriarchy, i.e., gender roles are culturally reinforced within and by aesthetics (textual, visual, representational) of the mainstream commercial cinema. Therefore, films that highlight the views of men are more important than those of women. It is an aesthetic choice based on the inequality of socio-political power between men and women.

In the chapter 'Visual Pressures: On Gender and Looking' in the book *Material Girls: Making Sense of Feminist Cultural Theory* by Suzanna Danuta Walter (1995), it is stated that the visual and aesthetic presentation of male gaze narrative cinema has three perspectives: (1) male behind the camera, (2) male characters in cinematic representations of films; and (3) the viewer staring at the picture. The complete dominance of the male role makes film entertainment media often biased and shows men as 'superior'.

While it is understood that male attitudes can have a detrimental effect on women's self-esteem and self-objectification, leading to increased body shame and a worsening mental state. For most women, physical and psychological interactions with the wrong men can lead to feelings of self-objectification and internalized negative mental states. It is not only a deteriorating mental state and self-objectification that are potential effects of negative male attitudes but also feelings of anxiety about physique and body shape. In the same way, the male gaze can hinder women's productivity and health. Women must be faced with views and labels that are not contextually appropriate when referring to cases of patriarchy. The male gaze, both in social life and melted into films, is certainly detrimental to the stereotype of women in society. In understanding the paradigm of feminism, both women and men should have a sense of security and comfort.

### 4. Conclusion

Aesthetics in films is not just a matter of fulfilling beauty, beauty, and happiness related to visuals. Aesthetics are things that are important and valuable to everyone. Therefore, the aesthetics for each person will be different, and everyone will judge the aesthetics differently. Therefore, objectifying the role of women in the film is not appropriate, especially if it is done from the perspective of a male gaze, which selfishly makes the character of how women should be seen a global discourse.

This standardization emerged because the female body used in the film always has the same characteristics. This makes the female body standardized in accordance with the commodified image through its appearance in the film, especially in the film 'Wedding Agreement'. Weak, succumbed, and easily oppressed are prolonged commodification that cannot be continued. If this is perpetuated, it will create stereotypes that strengthen the hegemony of men over women.

This leads to the conclusion that there has been a gap between the ideal concept of the cooperative relationship between men and women in various social conditions and their practice in the field. Therefore, efforts to educate about feminism and gender equality between men and women must be massive and directed. In addition, the cultural pattern of patriarchal life in a society of various ethnic groups and a misunderstanding of the sources of religious teachings to social problems are common tasks that must be addressed.

## 5. Suggestion

In order to respond to the many cases and the phenomenon of 'weak women' that are made into films, a wise paradigm is needed. This is so that there is no perpetuity of patriarchal practices in Indonesia through the concept of the male gaze. As explained above, the one-sided perspective of men in examining women's attitudes and values is inappropriate. However, this view has become a long legacy in Indonesia. To unravel these problems requires extra efforts from various parties.

Especially when it comes to its application in the commercial world, such as films, which have their own market prey, often, the use of touching stories is sold by producers to boost popularity and drain the audience's attention. However, even though it is in charge of satisfying the audience's emotions, the producer must still pay attention to the educational role in the novel he presents. Therefore, an understanding of gender equality must be built on a massive and prolonged basis.

This is because no single component has to work stronger than the other components in dealing with this one inherited legacy. All parties involved must study:

- The management of the film scenario,
- The mechanism of filming until the big visual theme

Supervision, instilling an awareness of the value of feminism and equality are needed to encourage empathy among women and men in Indonesia.

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