PSYCHOANALYSIS OF *PUBLIC AGENT*

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Abstract

This paper, entitled *Lacan's Psychoanalysis of Public Agent*, analyses an adult channel called *Public Agent* by using Lacan's Psychoanalysis. This research aims to analyse the portrayal of desire as seen in *Public Agent* and how it works in context of the videos through visual and in the conversation. This research focused on the visual aspect and utterances before the copulation part and the one after between the protagonist (male) and the woman. The study used a qualitative and descriptive method. The data collection was obtained from a popular adult site, pornhub.com. The data was analysed by using psychoanalysis theory by Jacques Lacan's three constituent contexts for the mind: the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic. The results of the research show that the absence of imaginary of the protagonists makes the audience as the subject of desire, instead of an outside spectator. Also, by analysing the, the utterance also, it can be concluded that *Public Agent* can be divided onto four phases.

Keywords: *Public Agent, Lacan's Psychoanalysis*

1.1 Introduction

Since the invention of motion picture in the 19th century, this new medium has been a new alternative for storytelling. This new role brings another dimension to the audience in receiving and understanding the meaning as portrayed and painted by the filmmakers. The experiment with pictures was applied by using some pictures that being set in order using a toy called Zoetrope. Later in 1888, a short motion picture that is believed to be as one of the very first ever recorded in history was recorded by French artist and inventor, Louis Le Prince; the famous 1.66 second motion picture known famously as *Roundhay Garden Scene* that shows Le Prince Family in the front yard of their house (Rossell, 1995).

The development of film industry in the 20th century really helped an artist in putting their desire on their work. Previously, the common way to express someone's idea and desire can be seen through paintings, musical pieces, sculpting, architectural design, written work – such as novels, poems, short stories, etc.; the existence of film industry brings another dimension that the imagery of that idea and desire, as well as the motion can be depicted and portrayed as wanted by the filmmakers.

Along with the development and the importance of the internet in this modern era, films also play a role in forming and creating alternatives in popular culture. According to Althusser (1971), Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. This means, the ideology and subjectivity the filmmakers have in mind when making one movie is unconsciously also a representation of things that are real in life outside the movie itself. As how relationship needs more than one party to work, this relationship works in two ways as the reality in the world shapes the ideology of the filmmaker, and vice versa, how the filmmaker creating their work out

of something or/and out of nothing to pays back the outside reality in the world.

As one of the alternatives in filming industry, adult content has a significant number of popularities through the number of streaming accessed on the internet. Based on the survey conducted by *Similarweb*, a digital market intelligence company, it shows that the popularity of adult sites accessed by people all around the world. Three big adult websites are in top twenty most visited website (as of September 1st 2021), with *xvideos*, *xnxx*, and *Pornhub* are in number 10, 13, and 17 respectively; as well as *xhamster* are lurking in number 22, just two spots outside the top twenty.

For there are many genres and channels offered in adult websites, the one that this study focused on is *Public Agent*, which is ranked as the seventh most popular channel in Pornhub. The concept of this channel is the protagonist would copulate with a stranger woman in public by making a fake offer and opportunities in modelling job, or sometimes just by simply offering them some amount of money to do so. The location where they copulate are mostly in hidden spots in public where people would not be able to see what they are doing, such as under the bridge, in the woods or bushes, the man's car, empty building, or sometimes in the woman's place.

This study aims to conduct psychoanalytic analysis through the registers of the real, the imaginary, and symbolic of the subject, in which in this case the protagonist of *Public Agent*. As McGowan & Kunkle (2004) stated that the filmic experiences creates a sense of subjectivity in the position of the spectator and sometimes it also feeds the viewer with fabricated subjectivity, the relationship between the imaginary-symbolic and subject would be identified.

2.1 Literature Review

Lacan proposed three main registers in psychoanalysis, which are The Real, The Symbolic, and The Imaginary.

The Real is the register where the exposure towards language is non-existent. This is more like an abyss of a subject, in which it is also a kind of natural state (the state of nature) of Thomas Hobbes. It is the deepest and a pure form of a subject where the symbolic and linguistic aspect cannot enter this state, as it is described as a complete fulfilment and perfect unity of a subject and mostly enjoyed through the earlier stages of life between 0-6 months old. The real would experience a progressive loss of touch when the symbolic register enters the life of that particular subject.

The concept of Imaginary Register is fundamentally the formation of ego in the mirror stage by one subject this formation happens when one subject realizing the image of themselves in the mirror. Once a subject identifies and realizing his form that is reflected through that mirror, which is simply an alienated shield that is obviously a different subject to what they really are, this so-called shield would be the image of themselves. During the age of 6-18 months, According to Lacan (1949), humans are born prematurely, meaning that they cannot directly coordinate the movements and organs of the body up to a certain age. This stage is the initial introduction stage of self as I, before then enter into the language region. Once they are exposed to their image in the mirror, they would be dependent on the other for their own physical well-being.

The symbolic is a register that has been expressed through language. It is a social meaning, logic, and codes this register is what human desire what to exceed as symbolic is limited and cannot facilitate what the subject really wants.

3.1 Methodology

This research uses qualitative method to analyse the imaginary and desire as portrayed in *Public Agent* which

represented through frames and conversation between the protagonist and the women. The data in this research are obtained from pornhub.com; which is one of the popular adult sites on the internet. Specifically, there are 10 episodes taken in this study. The data later divided to four stages as constructed. Further, the data was analysed by using Lacan's psychoanalytical theory. Then, researcher focuses on the how the videos presented and structured in order to portrays a represented desire in its production.

4.1 Finding and Discussion

In this part, the videos will be analysed through the representation in the images.

First, one detail of the concept in the production needs to be explained. The main protagonist has his camera on himself, which means that the spectator would not experience the mirror stage, or recognizing the image of himself. This concept is a unique and yet plays an important factor in what *Public Agent* wants to offer to the audience.

In films or theatrical performance, or even in the novel, the audience are mostly introduced to the main character or the protagonist. Sometimes in some films or novels, the main characters have no names given upon them, but still the audience can see the image of the main characters through actors or actresses who play the role. The role of main character is to be the anchor of attention that the audience would put their focus, attention, even to put themselves in the position in that particular character through the journey that they the protagonist would later experience in the stages of the film.

By giving this image of what the main character wears, the skin tone, how his or her hair is done, the pitch of their voice, and etc., the movie itself has taken a role of a mirror in the mirror stage as mentioned above that this moment would be a tragedy as where the desire as an audience, who has already lost his own desire in the real world,

to put on another image for a moment, as long as the film goes. This could be even more tragic if the audience puts themselves as *the other*, so that the character would merely be an object that the others are looking at. Thus, through this depiction, the role of the protagonist could fell onto either one out of two options available. These detail of the characters and the action they taken later throughout the story would help the audience to trace their desire through two registers, symbolic.

In *Public Agent*, the full one collective image of the protagonist is never shown. The audience can only see his hands, feet, and whatever the main character moves his head to. On the other hand, the one whole image of the woman the main character encounters are shown. The only sense of identity that the audience are given is that protagonist' ethnicity, a man named Martin, and the pitch of his voice when he is talking, and the fact that he owns some money in his pocket. In some episodes even the main character didn't mention his name but only his job as modelling agent.

Also, the main character asks more questions about the women's identity, such as their job, where do they want to go, and how much money they make in a month. This implies that the minimum information about the main character does not really matter, as it would invite the audience to be the main character and fills other.

In this sense, the main character was presented as white canvas with lots of space left and needs to be filled individually by the audience. In contrasting to three registers proposed by Lacan, the major stage portrayed in *Public Agent* is how subject's desire tries overcome the symbolic register. It is portrayed by how the woman the protagonist met on the street, would later be approached in order to have copulate with her.

There are four phases that can be drawn from the videos. There are: approaching phase, negotiating phase, copulation phase, and ending phase. The

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first phase is considerably a very simple thing to do for the protagonist. The video mostly begins with the protagonists are thrown in public places, mostly on the street, and would approach any woman he first met without any hesitation.
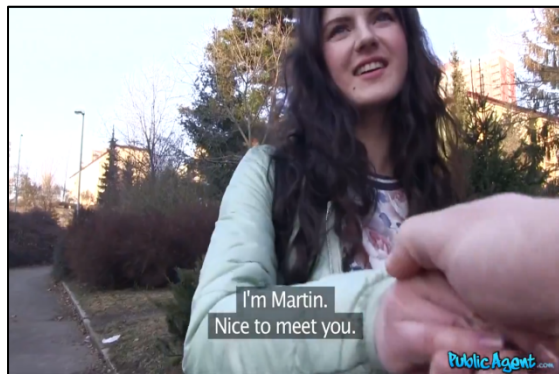

Figure 1. First Phase

As explained earlier that the concept of shot used in this production is the protagonist's POV, the imaginary stage is intentionally skipped in order to maintain the purity of Ideal-I as a whole. The audience may have different physical appearance, skin colour, and even pitch voice to the protagonist. However, this is the purpose that offered by the production itself. By eliminating the stage of giving full image of the character, the audience would see the video as it is his own experience, instead of another object's.

This formula of using POV shot in form wants the audience to feel like they are the one who is copulating with the full image of an object (whomever the protagonist is copulating with), in other words, the audience would be a whole subject of the action. On the other hand, how things work in other adult content that doesn't use POV shot would only put the audience as a spectator, or the other. Meanwhile, taking a position as the other would put the audience merely as a witness of two objects with their own unidentified desire.

In the second phase of the video where the negotiation occurs, the protagonist would offer an outstanding amount of money, far better than what the

women could make on a monthly basis. As previously mentioned, that the information provided are only the name and the job, without having any details on how much does the protagonist make in a month of work, no education nor family background, the blurry comprehension towards the character that the audience are playing as become distant from any social or codes that exist in the real world. Moreover, the sum of money the protagonist seems to be unlimited and can be drawn out of his pocket, no matter how much the agreed price is. In this phase, symbolic register comes up to existence even more with the language games used during the negotiating, the power the money holds, and the agreement to go somewhere where nobody can see the pair. The highlighted aspect in this phase is the possession of money and the power it holds, that can be traced back to the power in this construction is inside the protagonist pants.

Figure 2. Second Phase

In the third phase of the video, the audience experiencing more information on the protagonist as his body can be seen clearly. However, this exposure will not harm the Ideal-I itself for the body and the voice are still considered as a thing that comes out of nowhere, not from the protagonist's mouth as the concept and idea of how human talks being exposed in one full image.

In the fourth phase once the copulation has ended, there are mostly two alternative endings used to end the video. The first one, both sides feel satisfied and decide to leave immediately. Another ending is the protagonist left the location

while the woman still needs to clean up the mess. The first version of ending is used mostly when the two are copulating in a relatively quieter and hidden places, such as in the car, or in the woman's place, places where more private and secure. Meanwhile, the second version of ending used when the two characters in the video are copulating in a relatively more open places, such as under the bridge, an empty building, or not so far away from the accessible street. This second ending shows that the by leaving the location immediately. Basically, both ending shows that the protagonist intends to leave as soon as possible to end this journey, then the video would end by fading to black. These four phases of video ended in split of a second the way it also starts.

Once the video ends, the audience would find him/herself back to reality where the amount of money in a pocket is obviously limited unlike in the video where the protagonist can pull out as many as he want, where there is a possibility of getting rejected by woman is obvious, instead of getting caught even farther by the illusion of reality in reality. The illusion of being invincible, has unlimited amount of money, and would never get rejected by woman is a depiction of desire that brought to life and move the audience to the back seat and playing a temporary role as a pretended real subject.

5.1 Conclusion

From the findings and discussion section above, it is concluded that the role of the protagonist in the video is to be intended as the visual representation and to bring an illusion to the audience's unfulfilled desire. As when desire becomes reality, it would turn into a nightmare, the video also wants to highlighted the absurdities in one's desire by making the protagonist have large amount of money in his pocket, and he would never run out of it. Second, by having that much money can make the protagonist to get whatever the first thing he see as depicted in the video. Third, the symbolization used in video is

where he keeps all that power he possesses. It is shown through how the protagonist never uses a wallet, only cashes in his pocket, and second, his external copulatory organ that he has under his pants.

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