

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Female under the Male Gaze in *Malena*

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By

Bharat Kandel

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

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Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Central Department of English

Letter of Recommendation

Bharat Kandel has completed his thesis entitled “Female under the Male Gaze in *Malena*” under my supervision. He carried out this research from January 2012 to September 2012. I hereby recommend his thesis to be submitted for the *viva-voce*.

Mr. Harihar Jnawali

(Supervisor)

Date:

Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Science

Approval Letter

This thesis entitled “Female under the Male Gaze in *Malina*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Bharat Kandel has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of Research Committee

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head

Central Department of English

Date: _____

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Abstract

This study explores that female under the male gaze lack autonomous self. As a result they become exotic, submissive and mysterious. The male gaze expresses asymmetric power relationship between male and female. In the movie *Malena*, Malena is frequently presented as an object of gaze; she is the thing to be displayed. Since our societies have been patriarchal from time immemorial, the existing pattern of pleasure continuously exploit female. Female body is valued more for its erotic aspects, and a female is always asked to be pleasurable. She is expected to be beautiful according to the prevailing norm.

This study also explores the position of female characters especially Malena. It analyzes how male gaze is operating in the movie *Malena*. Imagery that objectifies female has long been a trend of our visual culture; it needs to be challenged for the sake of our society. One of the main motives behind this project is to remind people issues such as the male gaze and sexual objectification do still matter and are still very relevant. This research also suggests possible dimensions of the male gaze that have not already been investigated at length.

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I. Malena as an Object of Fantasy in *Malena*

This research tries to analyze in the movie *Malena* how the females get exploited through male gaze. The movie is directed by Giuseppe Tornatore, which is set in 1940's Italy. It presents the story of thirteen years old boy's infatuation with young lady. In the movie, female body has been commodified as the object. Females do not have control even in their own body. They are presented in such a way that they are object of gaze; they are the thing to be displayed. *Malena* is one of the representative examples of exploitation of female body. Male gaze is one of the controlling tools which reduces female subject to an object. The present movie creates the social codes of patriarchy which are imposed on the female characters. In the movie *Malena*, patriarchy strengthens its ideology by creating the duality between watchers and watched, gazer and gazed, mind and body, active and passive etc. The male gaze does not let the female to control the camera rather they are controlled by camera.

Though the movie is named after Malena, Malena is presented in such a way that, everyone gazes at her and fanaticize themselves. She is presented as a whore, seducer and betrayer. Other female characters also exploit over Malena. They are jealous over Malena's beauty. All the female characters in the movie are in the trap of male perspectives. Laura Mulvey argues that "fascination of film is reinforced by pre-existing patterns of fascination already at work within the individual subject and the social formations that have moulded him" (21). Drawing upon Mulvey's ideas it can be argued that the fascination of the movie does not go beyond the social parameters of the then *Italian* society. Patriarchal fascination with female goes in parallel with the fascination on the female body in the movie. *Malena* is the reflection of our patriarchal social structure. Malena writes the social code of our male desires. She is

presented as an object pleasure. Cinematic image of the Malena satisfies the male needs, which serves to fulfill the then societies wish over the female. As Mary Ann Doane Suggest, "Historically, there have always been a certain imbrications of the cinematic image and the representation of the woman. The woman's relationship to the camera and the scopic regime is quite different from that of the male" (760). There lies certain politics behind erotic representation of female characters. In the film Malena's relation to the camera depends on her relation to the male. It means her relation to the camera is determined by her relation to Renato. Malena is the object where as Renato is subject.

In this movie the approach to the female figure is not natural. The point is that the way people approach the images on the screen is neither natural nor universal. It rather is deeply embedded in the subject formation process. Our world view is the result of socialization process. Already existing ideas, values and norms are installed in our mind. So, the way we enjoy and detest things are often cultural than natural.

In the same way, human history that extends for thousands of years where female are regarded as the chattel property of men; objects to be used, abused and traded. They are regarded as an object of pleasure and fantasy, as the people in the movie get pleasure by gazing at the body of Malena. Even the thirteen year young boy fantasizes by looking at the body of Malena. The boy dreams of her, wears her dress and gets satisfaction by indulging in phantasm on her. He follows her wherever she goes and peeps from the crack of the window. He is totally obsessed with her body. That shows the way of getting pleasure by staring at the body of female. Once again Ann Doanne relevant here with the claim that "woman is frequently the object of the voyeuristic or fetishistic gaze in the cinema" (761). It clearly shows that females are frequently stared and suffered by males in this patriarchal society.

There are many critical concerns regarding the movie *Malena*. David Rooney argues about the movie by locating it on the ground of socio-political scenario of 1940s. He is critical about the movie as he focuses on the characteristic of Malena.

He writes:

Perceived as a whore by the malicious townswomen, she gradually is pushed by harsh circumstance into assuming that role for a series of Fascist government officials. When liberation comes and U.S. troops arrive, Malena is dragged into the piazza and beaten by a mob of angry shrews, who then hack off her hair in a scene of unnecessarily protracted violence...despite Bellucci's strong presence in a role with little dialogue, the central character never really comes alive in any way interesting enough to give her ordeal much genuine pathos.

(February 7, 2001)

In the above mentioned extract, David Rooney is critical about the protagonist Malena. Malena is such a character that wherever she goes, all the people including men and women all watch her. Besides these, thirteen years old narrator becomes obsessed with her. Renato Malena is object of fantasy and imagination. After the news of her husband's death she no longer becomes protected from society, she becomes a fair game.

Likewise, Michele Parisi on the magazine 'Best of Sicily' writes about the movie *Malena*. He argues about the movie by locating it on the ground of historical, political, social and moral aspect of the movie. He writes:

The movie is, essentially, the story of the young widow's experiences in an environment which, by today's standards, is backward. Tornatore takes a few liberties with historical facts, but the real shortcoming of

Malena is that, despite inspired direction and competent acting, it falls short as both a coming-of-age picture and a serious drama. It begins as an almost playful adventure, and Maléna herself is initially portrayed as an almost ideal wife. It soon deteriorates into an all too familiar exercise in unnecessary sex, violence, and sexual violence as Maléna prostitutes herself and the local women take their revenge on her. (Feb 11, 2010)

In the above mentioned extract Michele Parisi is critical about the movie *Malena*. The movie is, essentially, the story of the young widow's experiences in an environment which, by today's standards, is backward. Malena in the beginning is an ideal wife but latter all too familiar exercise in unnecessary sex, violence, and sexual violence is happened in the movie.

Thus, it is evident from the review of the criticism available on the film none of the critics has thrown light upon the film from the perspective of male gaze. That is why male gaze and its various concepts are newer perspective to look at the movie which will help to uplift the condition of female characters. This thesis investigates the tendency of male gaze over the female body by applying the theory of feminist film critic, theory of male gaze developed by Laura Mulvey, Mary Ann Doane etc.

Feminist film critics analyze the film by focusing the function of women characters in particular film narratives or genres and of stereotypes as a reflection of a society's view of women. Works such as Marjorie Rosen's *Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies, and the American Dream* (1973) and Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in Movies* (1974) analyzes the portrayal of the women, stereotypes and the amount of screen time given to female by relating it to the historical context. Feminist film critic argues that production of meaning in the

film is the outcome of different mechanisms which affects the representation of women.

The word 'gaze' normally refers to stare which means to look at something continuously without winking eyes so as to carefully observe or dominate what is looked at. In a normal sense, people do not object or care when they are looked at but reversely they feel uncomfortable or even get angry when someone gazes them curiously. So, gazing at somebody can become the source of irritation for the person who is being gazed. Sometimes it may be the cause of quarrel or dispute between and among the participants; consequently the violence will take place as well. In a sense, gazing rapes as a gazer invades the privacies of those who are gazed at. Gazing is even an obsessive watching, and a one-way, non-interactive response like rape. Respectively, the gazer is the rapist who is unable to enjoy consensual and mutually rewarding sex, mercilessly exercising brutal power on an innocent victim in a cruel way. So, gaze is a metaphor of rape that may invite violence in the society as well. Voyeuristic gaze is a prelude to violence such as rape, murder, quarrel while trying to pacify one's sexual needs.

The words 'look' and gaze have basic difference because to look is generally to have a normal sight of something that our eyes can catch but gaze is different from look; it is more associated with power. John Berger's book *Ways of seeing*, first published in 1972 A.D., set the ground for the development of gaze theories. Jermy Hawthorn in *Theories of the Gaze* writes

Theorists of the gaze are concerned to develop the ways of exploring the interaction between different forms of literal and metaphorical looking. Some of these concerns clearly overlap with a traditional literary critical interest in narrative techniques; the older term; point of

view' remains useful in reminding us of the way in which we naturally use our visual engagement with the world as a model or metaphor to encompass those choices studied by the narratologist. But while the study of narrative has often shown little concern with culture, history, politics, and, most of all, power- theories of the gaze are very much occupied by these factors. (509)

As Hawthorn has described it, gaze is not simply a look. Gaze carries so much meaning within it. It is often associated with power and politics. In our society male has gaze because male is powerful in our society. But female lacks gaze because she lacks power. So, male always gaze female according to its likes and dislikes. Male creates certain point of view to gaze at female.

Mulvey elaborates her argument in patriarchal culture do not let women to make their own meaning. As she argues:

woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning. (747)

Mulvey explains the existence of the male gaze in terms of patriarchy and castration anxiety. Woman, lacking a penis, symbolizes the threat of castration. By objectifying her on screen as a passive sexual object, man tries to gain control of her and overcome his fear of castration. At the same time, the male gaze is a reflection of an unequal power relationship and a tool of domination. The patriarchal order defines eroticism in such a way that it tends to sustain patriarchy itself. This concept is also

reflected in the movie. *In this regard*, Mulvey elaborates the connection of the gaze, Freud and the cinema.

The cinema offers a number of possible pleasures. One is scopophilia (pleasure in looking). There are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at. Originally, in his Three Essays on Sexuality, Freud isolated scopophilia as one of the component instincts of sexuality which exist as drives quite independently of the erotogenic zones. At this point he associated scopophilia with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze. (16)

As told by Mulvey, scopophilia is a way of obtaining pleasure. This way of obtaining pleasure has specific importance in the digital world or in the cybernetic space.

Mulvey quotes Freud to show how scopophilia is operating in our daily lives.

Basically, Mulvey wants to understand, and denounce, the visual focus on women on screen. She adopts psychoanalysis as an explanatory framework, drawing upon to the Freudian notions of scopophilia and castration anxiety. According to Freud scopophilia, the desire to see, is fundamentally sexual in origin, and is associated with taking pleasure in looking at other people as objects. Cinema, Mulvey claimed, satisfies this scopophilic drive. Mulvey further elaborates her argument by commenting on male gaze. She argues that:

The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*,"(750).

Mainstream film, Mulvey argues, reduces women to to-be-looked-at-ness, to passive objects for male fetishistic gazing and desire. Men, on the other hand, are presented as active agents and as possessors of the gaze, and hence, as representatives of power. Women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact. They function as erotic objects both for the characters within the story and for the spectators, who identify with the male protagonist and derive a sense of omnipotence from this identification. Mulvey's argument brings out the point, that within the narrative of the film, male characters direct their gaze towards female characters and the spectator in the theater is automatically and often unconsciously made to identify with the male look, because the camera films from the optical, as well as libidinal point of view of the male character.

The notion of male gaze has become a shorthand term for the analysis of complex mechanism in cinema that involves structure such as voyeurism, narcissism and fetishism. It is an active way of looking with certain manipulation. The active/passive split of looking is sustained in cinema with three set of looks. While describing these three set of looks Kaplan argues that "the first one is the camera's look, which "comes into play in the very act of filming" (30). The other two are character's looks at each other with in the film text itself and the audiences look which is made to identify with the male gaze, and to "objectify the woman on the screen" (15). There are therefore two aspects to visual pleasure that are negotiated through sexual differences; the voyeuristic-scopophilic gaze and narcissistic identification. Both of them are formative structures depend for their meaning upon the controlling power of male character as well as on the objectified representation of the female character.

So, the point related to this thesis is that in the movie *Malena* female characters are misrepresented. They are made to identify with the males. Females are used only to arouse voyeuristic pleasure to the male audience. Because of the male gaze, spectators are forced to make narcissistic identification with the male characters. Female characters are made the object of fantasy. Females are represented in such a way that serves to extend the gender stereotypes. Female body has been commercialized and objectified under the male gaze. Females lack autonomous self as a result they become exotic, submissive and mysterious. The male gaze expresses an asymmetric power relationship between female and male. Male possesses a gaze because he is a man, whereas, a woman has gaze only. Patriarchal dominance was the root cause and the enduring factor behind women's objection to the all-pervading male gaze and its connotations needs to be challenged for the sake of progression.

This research foregrounds gaze as an issue in *Malena*. It exposes the issue of gaze in the movie and builds theoretical background to critic the movie. The first chapter presents a general introduction of the whole research paper along with a hypothesis, its point of departure and a brief preview of the whole work. Second chapter deals with the female under male gaze. It analyzes different examples to show the prevalence of male gaze in the movie. It takes different pictures from the movie to show how female are under the grip of male gaze. It proves how female characters are used to arouse voyeuristic pleasure in the movie. It shows the representation of the female protagonist of the movie. As she suffers from the patriarchal domination, this thesis exposes the condition of the female characters in the movie. And the third chapter concludes that male gaze is dominant in the movie. It proves that role of female character in the movie is to serve heterosexual male character and its audiences.

II. Female under Male Gaze in *Malena*

This research tries to analyze the depiction of female characters in the movie *Malena*. It exposes the misrepresentation of female characters. Female characters have been stereotypically presented in the movie. The movie displays a kind of obsession on to the female body which caters to male voyeuristic gaze. It accelerates the male gaze by positioning female characters as passive sexual objects who can only exhibit to-be-looked-at-ness. As far as the issue of female representation is concerned, it is not fair to the female character and its audiences. As Claire Johnston writes, “within a sexist ideology and a male-dominated cinema, women is presented as what she represents for man” (33). The movie is guided by the sexist ideology of male gaze. Female characters are used only to give sexual pleasure to the heterosexual male audiences.

In the movie, all the female characters are in the grip of ‘male gaze’. Female characters are defined by the male gaze. Their subjectivity is created through the male gaze. Because of the effect of dominant male gaze in the movie, female characters have been objectified. The movie presents the distorted image of female figure. Female characters are presented as passive and erotic object. They are treated as pleasure giving object. The role of female character in the movie is to arouse sexual desire into the male figure. Male characters carve their fantasies onto the female body. The visual culture constructed by male gaze tells us more about the men than it can ever tell us about women. This movie is also a part of visual culture which creates the meaning of women. As Douglas Kellner points out:

Radio, television, film and other products of the culture industries provide the models of what it means to be male or female, successful or a failure, powerful or powerless. Media culture helps shape the

prevalent view of the world and its deepest values: it defines what is considered good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil. (1)

Male gaze has *become a means* of manipulation and controlling the female body in the film. Male figures manipulate their desire on to the female figure. They control female desire physically and psychologically. Female body is treated as if it is pleasure giving objects. The representation of female as a pleasure giving objects can be seen in many scenes. Treating women as pleasure giving object begins from the movie. This can be found in the dialogue, focus of the camera and in the activity of the character. When Renato including his friend first see Malena they comment over her:

RENATO: Who is she?

BOYS: The deaf guy's daughter, our new latin teacher.

RENATO: What's her name? -What a wonderful ass!

What I wouldn't give for an hour with her!

Too bad she's married. - If she weren't-- What's her name?

FRIENDS OF RENATO: Malena, the most beautiful ass in Castelvato.(7:03)

It is natural for the boys to make comments on female body in patriarchal society as males are superior to the females in social structure. Above dialogue taken from the movie presents Malena as object. She is addressed first as 'The deaf guy's daughter' as if she has no real name. Second, they are focusing her 'ass'. Here, her ass has been eroticized by the boys. She is valued in terms of her sexuality.

Fascination of cinema comes through different factors. Mulvey claims that magic of the cinema lies in it's "skilled and satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure" (16).She finds, "central to this visual pleasure is "Scopophilia" or pleasure

in looking"(16). Again she defines Scopophilia as "taking people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze" (16). She further claims that "scopophilia starts from using another person as an erotic object through sight and is developed through narcissism and the formation of the ego which comes from identification with the image seen on screen" (18). Mulvey argues that woman as an image always threatens to evoke the castration anxiety it signifies and there are two ways to escape from this. First is through voyeurism, which is eroticization of woman, investigating woman, or showing her in a victim position, and then either punishing, demystifying or saving her. E. Ann Kaplan defines Voyeurism as "involved pleasure through control or domination and with punishing the woman (15). Similarly Mulvey adds: "that affirms mastery of the male character" (21). Second is through fetishism which shows female's body in extreme perfection. Festishic strategy "focuses on fragments of female's body in close-ups. Therefore the female character is valued only for her erotic look, beauty and desirability" (23).

Monica Bellucci plays an impossible vision of beauty; a woman so striking she is immediately sexualised by all who lay eyes on her. Malena's reaction to the leering male gaze and subsequent scorn of jealous women is expressed through her hair, make-up and clothing. In the example of the movie both voyeurism and fetishism are used through Camera's look and Renato's look. Camera gazes at the fragments of the female character's body in close-ups. We see only her legs, lips and breasts through the gaze of the camera several times. These close-ups start with her first scene in her room. Malena is preparing to go outside; we see her legs in close-ups. The image of Malena in close-ups shows her fetishized place in the movie.



Fig.1 Malena Preparing to Go Outside.

This figure introduces Malena first in the movie. These are the figures taken from the movie which shows Malena preparing for outside. Our introduction to the character occurs with Malena wearing a just-below-the-knee white dress, lightly padded shoulders, and deep neckline incorporating dotted bow detail. In and through these scenes, the woman is positioned as an object for male gaze. Her image is constructed as "to-be-looked-at". The image of her in these close ups shows her fetishized place." As Susan Danuta Walters argues that "in film, fetishism often takes the form of a sexualization of women's bodies or parts of their bodies, ascribing a phallic connotation to a female body part (legs, breasts) in order to reclaim the woman and rid oneself of the threat of otherness generally and the threat of castration specifically"(236). Women through a series of feminine rituals objectify their bodies. In cinema, particularly, the male gaze takes "visual" and "narrative" control of the woman's body. Through exaggeration of body parts and styles she chooses, a woman is fetishized. Thus, it turns the female into a fetish object. Hence, male gaze is operating here. A woman grows to reflect the worth that man invests in her and, principally, she becomes man's most precious commodity.



Fig. 2 Boys Gazing at Malena in a Street.

In this fig. 2 Malena is going outside her home. Some boys are waiting her outside on the road so that they could see the beautiful Malena. After looking Malena they want to fulfill their sexual desire. It is feature of male gaze where men look into the female body to fulfill their sexual lust. But for women to walk down a city street is to seemingly invite gawkers, propositions, and unsolicited commentary. Mary Devereaux notes that “women are doubly victimized; first, they are positioned in a certain way in films by men, and second, they are eroticized” (347). Although the women’s role in a film revolves around her sexual attraction and the mating games she plays with the male characters, the man is not shown purely in relation to the female characters but in a wide variety of roles.



Fig. 3 Malena Dancing in Her Rooms

This figure shows that Malena is dancing alone in her room by remembering her husband. At this time Renato is peeping her through the hole. Here John Berger is remarkable for a comment that “men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at” (47). He goes on to say, “[t]his determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of the woman in herself is male: the surveyed female” (47). As Jonathan Schroeder notes “to gaze implies more than to look at - it signifies a psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze” (208). A key feature of the gaze is that the object of the gaze is not aware of the current viewer though they may originally have been aware of being filmed, photographed, painted etc. Viewing in such a way gives the viewer's gaze a voyeuristic dimension. In fig. 3 Renato is more powerful than Malena, he is shown active whereas Malena is shown emotional and erotic. As Mulvey says, “representation of the more perfect, more powerful ideal ego of the male hero stands in stark opposition to the distorted image of the passive female character” (12). Hence the spectator is actively made to identify with the male rather than the female character in the film.

The display of the woman on the screen tends to interrupt the narrative drive of the development of the film. As Mulvey says:

The presence of woman in an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of the action in moments of erotic contemplation. (9)

On the screen, Malena becomes a sex object under the male gaze. As the plot of the movie opens with war and ends with war. There is no any significance of her erotic presence. Her presence in the movie is only to arouse erotic contemplation to the male characters. The male lookers are the powerful part while the females being looked at are the weaker part. As Mulvey argues, “in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active / male and passive / female” (209). While Malena is established as a sight for voyeuristic pleasure throughout the film, she is also depicted as a person who is active in the process of acquiring vision. Through this process the spectator becomes tied into the film.

Living in a time governed by phallogocentric values, Melana has to submit herself to men's judgments and decisions. Melana's struggle can not surpass the discourse that regulates the phallogocentric system. The action that she goes out to make a living now turns into a justification for her exclusion. Or, more precisely, it marks her 'otherness'. The privilege of the masculine (the phallus) administrates the understanding, meaning or social relations. As Simon de Beauvoir writes:

Like all the oppressed, women deliberately dissembles her objective actuality; the slave, the servant, the indigent, all who depend upon the caprices of a master, have learned to turn toward him a changeless

smile or enigmatic Impassivity, their real sentiments, their actual behavior are carefully hidden. (998)

In the movie, Malena has no freedom to pursue her happiness because there is no real freedom in the phallogentric society. All the rules, customs and civil liberties are made by men. And all the rival ideologies against phallogentric ideology would be stifled in the cradle. Finally Malena becomes a victim of the phallogentric ideology.

Malina, in the process of submission to male desire, resembles a product, a consumable object. Women are victims of, but also the agents of "objectification."

Carol J. Adams defines objectification as:

That which permits an oppressor to view another being as an object, the oppressor then violates this biting by object-like treatment: e.g., the rape of women that denies women freedom to Say no, or the butchering of animals that converts animals from living breathing things into dead objects. This process allows fragmentation, or brutal dismemberment, and finally consumption. (47)

Within consumer culture, the body is proclaimed as a vehicle of pleasure. Not only this, as M. Featherstone goes on to say, "higher the beauty higher its exchange value (184). Malena is just a vehicle of pleasure because she has higher beauty. Her beauty gets exhibited in many minds. In Marxist term she is the object to be sold. Everyone has desire to have good product. Everyone wants her because she is most beautiful in the town.



Fig. 4 Renato and Other Men Gazing at Malena

In the movie, Malena is regarded as an erotic object of the male gaze. She is a 'star' adored by the men in the small town. Mulvey argues that “the image of woman as (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man takes the argument a step further into the structure of representation, adding a further layer demanded by the ideology of the patriarchal order as it is worked out in its favourite cinematic form - illusionistic narrative film” (15). The woman image in the narrative film is not only displayed as the erotic object, but also as the passive object of patriarchal ideology. In the picture above Malena’s eyes are cast down where as other men including Renato are looking Malena straightly. Richard Dyer is remarkable here as he writes:

Where the female model typically averts her eyes, expressing modesty, patience and a lack of interest in anything else, the male model looks either off or up. In the case of the former, his look suggests an interest in something else that the viewer cannot see - it certainly doesn’t suggest any interest in the viewer. Indeed, it barely acknowledges the viewer, whereas the woman’s averted eyes do just that - they are averted from the viewer. (265)

As Dyer writes it is the feature of gaze where females can not look straight. She has to avert her eyes to express modesty. They have to remain passive and submissive. This again creates a duality between active male and passive female. This is the voyeuristic activity of the male where viewed does not know of being viewed. The movie also extends the patriarchal ideology by placing male as higher than the female. Men are the owner of the gaze because they have power. The movie creates a kind of gender relation in the form of gaze. This gendered relation to the gaze is both the product of patriarchy and also a way of reinforcing male dominance. The form of a viewer's engagement in a movie depends on the viewer's gender, and this is because a person's unconscious desires depend on gender. In the movie too the gaze is gendered because female are denied of the gaze. Nowhere in the movie there is existence of female gaze

The way film depicts the female differs from the way it depicts male. Females are still depicted in a different way to men because the "ideal" spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designated to flatter him. As when we go through *Malena*, the female characters' depiction differs from the male characters depiction. For instance Malena is depicted as mysterious woman, she goes outside but there is no any hint about where she goes. At her room, in the night, she dances alone. She is living all alone. Men visitors come in to the house regularly but why do they come? These kinds of question in the minds of the audience make Malena mysterious. Beauvoir argues "woman is considered to be mysterious in essence" (1997). In the house of Renato too, there is the subversion of female identity. Females are confined to the household. Renato's mother and sister have been poor at the hand of Renato's father. On the other hand Renato's father is depicted in different way, he is bold figure, who controls his family. Exploitation of female body can be clearly seen into the Renato's house. For the small reason Renato's father bits his own

wife, command his wife, presents himself as all powerful and the head of the family. Patriarchal social structure is operating in Renato's house.

Because of the sexual hierarchy in the movie, Renato tells the story through his eyes. He plays the role of narrator because he is the male. While on the other side Malena's role is to show and to perform what Renato aspects. The most striking point is that Renato's role as the narrator fosters the male gaze in the movie. Malena's story is revealed through the eyes of a 13-year-old boy (Giuseppe Sulfaro), who is captivated by her. He observes helplessly as her life unravels following her husband's death in the war. Alone and unable to find work, the young widow half-defiantly, half-desperately becomes a prostitute for the village's German occupiers. This is not justifiable in terms of many aspects because, telling the story through the male character does not let the female's subjectivity to come out. Malena as Malena cannot come out from Renato. Renato imposes his own desires while narrating Malena.

Male gaze itself is the trope of cinematic production. Male gaze has mastered over female body, it knows how to produce image of women. It creates image of woman as an object. Woman as an object can be seen in the act of Renato. Most often Renato either peeps Malena through the hole or uses camera/telescope to look at her. In many scenes we see Renato gazing Malena by using camera. His gazing through camera appropriates Malena as an object. Looking at someone using a camera (or looking at images thus produced) is clearly different from looking at the same person directly. As D. Harper says, "Images allow us to make statements which cannot be made by words, and the world we see is saturated with sociological meaning" (38).



Fig. 5 Renato Peeping Malena through Camera

The gaze, however, is owned by the masculine subject. Iris Marion Young says, "that upon which it gazes is feminine. Women are only lack, the unified identity to men's looking" (179). Young suggests that women can only maintain access to subjectivity by "adopting this position of the male subject who takes pleasure in the objectification of women" (179). Renato's watch on Malena is the typical voyeuristic activity of children. His desire to see Malena's naked body is a desire to make sure of the private and the forbidden. Accompanying with scopophilia, Renato's actions are also arisen by Oedipus complex. The theory of Oedipus complex says that young boys unconsciously rival their fathers for their mothers' affection. As a young boy, Renato has a strong desire for the opposite sex especially the adult woman. Compared with the girls of his age, Renato finds Malena much more attractive. Only this type of woman can make him mature soon.

Indeed, the camera frequently enables us to look at people whom we would never otherwise see at all. In a very literal sense, the camera turns the depicted person into an object, distancing viewer and viewed. In controlling the image, the photographer has power over those in front of the lens, a power which may also be lent to viewers of the image. In this sense, the camera can represent a 'controlling

gaze'. In the movie all the cinematic production together with the male character's activity has mastered over female body.



Fig. 6 Renato watching Naked Picture of Female

In one scene, Renato is going to sleep. He is alone in the room, at this time he looks at different naked pictures of female including Malena. Female's body has been photographed in the movie. It is from the beginning, photography has been used to sustain, affirm or remember loved ones. It is a powerful tool for expressing intimate and profound connections between people. At the same time, and often in the very same images, photography is a tool for voyeurism, allowing the viewer to see without being seen, to experience visual pleasure or collect visual information with little or no risk to one's self.

Photography is a means of control, visual exploration, human connection and all of the messy yet intriguing spaces in between. Christian Metz compares photography with shooting. He compares camera with a gun because it has a power to capture somebody else. As he says, "the photographic act (or acting, who knows?) has been frequently compared with shooting, and the camera with a gun" (84). The photograph, inexhaustible reserve of strength and anxiety, shares, as we see, many

properties of the fetish (as object), if not directly of fetishism (as activity). To keep photograph means to fetishize people. As Metz goes on to say, “the familiar photographs that many people carry with them always obviously belong to the order of fetishes in the ordinary sense of the word” (84). Susan Sontag links photograph with objects because she says, “to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed” (4). This carries heavy meanings within it. Images are not only to print. As R. Walker says, “images ‘are not just adjuncts to print,’ but carry heavy cultural traffic on their own account” (72). *Malena* represents the female character as an object of desire and of male fantasies: a silent, obedient, beautiful and erotic image. As in the movie, in one bed scenes at the time of sleeping, Renato looks naked picture of different girls; there he fantasizes about Malena too. In his fantasy Renato sees Malena as naked. We clearly see that male gaze has strengthened control over the woman by imprisoning "woman" in a mute picture on the screen. The male gaze that dominates in the movie positions female subject; first only as a body and then exploits female body.

And the targeted spectators are male; it gives no room for female spectatorship. The male spectators also project their fantasy and look according to their like and dislike. As the spectators identify with the main male protagonist, they project their look onto that of their like, their screen surrogate so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence.



Fig. 7 Malena in Renato's imagination

The domination and exploitation of female body under male gaze is seen when the male narrator Renato acts according to his interest and pleasure. He is the actor in the movie; he acts according to his likes and dislikes. For example, he desires to sleep with Malena, he makes her to sleep with him. Renato desires to play with the naked body of the Malena. But on the other hand the female figure is acted upon. She acts according to Renato's desire. She becomes naked too when Renato fantasizes the nakedness of her body. Malena has become mechanical instrument who reacts to the stimuli exerted by the narrator. She is controlled and manipulated by the powerful driver Renato- male member of the society. Renato does not react according to Malena rather he makes Malena react because he is the male, the one who is considered as the driver of female.

Another exploitation that is seen in the movie is the Malena's aesthetic perfection. Malena is shown with aesthetic perfection which indicates another level of control over her. Her appearance is shown as "too good to be true". She is always posed in full make-up. Her hairdo always looks as if it was just dressed. Almost all the scenes in the movies portray Malena as aesthetically complete figure.

Aesthetically she is complete. Although her circumstances are hard to bear she goes

through the bitter reality in her life; her husband and father has been died, she has nothing to eat in her home but her body parts and clothing are focused in such a way that she has nothing left to be complete beautifully.



Fig. 8 Aesthetically Complete Malena

This figure shows Malena as aesthetically complete. Although she is raped, harassed and persecuted, her hair, clothing and make-up are not spoiled. Her body as shown in the figure is as beautiful as she has before. In these scenes too she has been exploited she has been presented as a sexual object. In this scene she is not only displayed as an aesthetically perfect woman, she is also being gazed at. We can see other male figures gazing at Malena's beauty. Her lipstick seems perfect; her eyes are full of passion. These all suggest her shot in an erotic way. This presentation places her in a safe place for the "male gaze".

The problem here is not only that this film presents as normal a stereotypical view of Italian machismo. It is that this gaze in the film is never corrected, never challenged. Most objectionably, it is celebrated. Whatever destructive decisions Malena makes concerning her sexual power she does not deserve to be controlled by these men and later physically attacked by the women of the village. This attack scene

is emotionally and physically violent. In the classic tradition of film noir Malena is punished for asserting her sexual power. Some people think that films are pornographic because of nudity and sexual activity.



Fig. 9 Renato in Brothel House

This figure shows the pornographic presentation of the female characters in the movie. Pornographic presentation is directly linked to erotic aspects. If we analyze this figure, female figure is going to be naked to have sexual intercourse. These scenes in which the camera gazes at the porn movie, the porn movies characters are reduced to body and positioned fetishistically as objects of the male gaze. Females in the porn scenes become fixed, controlled, being served for the pleasure of the male gaze through the fragmentation, nakedness and exposition of their body. In one scene when Renato shows his abnormal behavior, his father takes him to brothel house. In the brothel house Renato chooses the best (who is shown in fig.9) among many whom he sees as Malena. Thus, this scene of pornography again objectifies female subject. Pornography is the outcome of our patriarchy and we must not forget. As Lofgren-Martenson and Mansoon writes, “porn tends to legitimize and reinforce an unequal and prejudiced view of sexuality and the relationship between sexes” (2006).

Although porn is not reality the actors and actresses are real people doing real things and the consequences are real as well. Again they highlights “for young people pornography is a direct source of information, information they consider real and useful” (2006). In the aftermath the fact is that this makes it very likely for boys or men to integrate things they learn from pornography to their own sexual practices and thus the degradation of women becomes a norm in their own bedroom, the fantasy turns into reality. Andrea Dworkin is remarkable here:

It is the power men have over women turned into sexual acts men do to women, because pornography is the power and the act. It is the conditioning of erection and orgasm in men to the powerless of women; inferiority, humiliation, pain, torment; to use as objects, things, or commodities for use in sex as servants. It sexualizes inequality and in doing so creates discrimination as a sex based practice. (26)



Fig. 10 Pronographic Scene in the Movie

Showing the female on porn scenes serve for the utter pleasure in looking. Firstly because the porn characters are located at a distance in relation to the voyeurs, which allows both the characters in the movie and the spectator of the movie to maintain

control, mastery and domination. And secondly, the close ups on the females body parts overemphasize the “first” and “only” function of those female, i.e. to-be-looked-at-ness, which maintains another level of control through the erotic objectification. Those females on the porn screen are posed just to provide and represent utter pleasure to the males.



Fig. 11 Malena as a Prostitute

In the movie the exploitation of female body occurs in its extreme when Malena's husband is supposed to be dead. As the movie continues and Malena's husband is known to be dead in action, the men get excited about her being a widow and single. They attempt to court her with financial offers and sympathetic remarks. She goes through very hard circumstances. Other females still mock her and are disgusted by her, believing she will whore around now because she is not tied to one man and needs support. Malena begins to really struggle financially with her small pension and without money from her husband. It is as if all the talk from the town, gossip, and trial (with the accusation of Malena having relations with different men) forces Malena to give up, and live it to make it true. Like many women during that time of war and depression in Italy, Malena turns to prostitution for income and a way of living.

In the sexually imbalanced society, sexual difference is established socially. The visual images, made by men, of women in the past: the good mother; the chaste maiden; the whore; the witch; the smiling naked. In the movie, Malena is totally controlled by the lustful male society. She is forced to change herself from a chaste woman to a prostitute. She is made to sell her own body. When she is still a dressmaker, the men in the town are keen to get touch with her. However, people offer no job for her after she becomes a widow. Finally, she has to make a living by being prostitute herself.

Historically, the power of the gaze has been man's possession. In this context Linton remarks that "historically entrenched tradition of male artists that produced artwork for a primarily male clientele" (2). This art frequently depicted nude female subjects posed for the delectation of their male audience. In such works, the gaze of the female subject is often cast downwards, or turned away from the audience. Essentially, the "male gaze" is often met with a passive gaze that is neither threatening nor judgmental. Moreover, as told by Van Zoonen "film reflects, reveals, and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle" (90).

The female character in the movie is represented in the silent form; very few words are given to her. This suggests that in the movie female character are under double surveillance by the male gaze. First, is the surveillance of the femininity by the pervasive male gaze making female figure obedient to the system. Second is that it places female as mute object, to be used according to the male wishes. As Kaja Silverman says, "female subjectivity has"receptivity" to the male voice as well as to his gaze that keeps her under double surveillance" (312). There is no role of female subjectivity, only males are given power to control and dominate the female. Female

subject is denied in the process of discursive power formations. Here, once again Silvermen's critique on Hollywood cinema is applicable as she highlights the importance of female voice in the movie. She argues that "in cinema the male subject has the discursive power while the female subject is excluded from it" (164). Muteness of the female protagonist in the movie *Malena* starts from the beginning of the movie. Malena goes outside but she does not speak even a single word. It is other male character who talks about her. This muteness of Malena throws herself under male control.

A female under patriarchy is always safe. This can be explained in the movie. For example the movie takes a different turn at the end from its beginning. At the beginning while she was alone, she suffers a lot. When we learn Malena's husband has not died, and has come back looking for her, and when she returns with her man they treat her completely different. In one sense Malena is unsafe because she is deprived of her male counterpart. In comparison to her, other women are safe because they are helped by male. This emphasizes the patriarchal culture. Surely it has been a culture for a woman to accept male and once again male gaze. In order to be safe female needs male. Being a single or apart from male gaze is very dangerous for women. There lies certain politics behind creating such atmosphere of patriarchy.

In the movie, the portrayal of the Malena and the other female characters under the male gaze can be compared and contrasted. In general, the entire female figure has been exploited under the male gaze but Malena's exploitation differs from that of the other females. Under the male gaze Malena's body has been exploited, she is treated as an object, which can be used to fulfill sexual desire of the male. On the other hand other females too are treated as the object but they have been means to

sustain the patriarchy. Other women in town are played out to be normal Italian housewives, who judge Malena right from the start.

Cinema offers different kinds of images of the female characters. As Ceulemans and Fauconnier writes:

Two images of women are dominant in contemporary cinema: they are either portrayed as domestic, protected, sexless beings, or as sexually liberated persons. She claims that the image of the passive, domestic woman has increasingly been replaced by that of the "loose" woman. This parallels Haskell's and Rosen's observation that women are predominantly shown as sexual symbols. (29)

In the movie Malena too there are two kinds of women depicted. All the female characters except Malena have been presented in the domestic activities. Other females are passive, they are sexless being where as Malena has been presented on the contrary. Sexless being is replaced by sexual being. She is presented as symbol of sex. She gives blow to the other females. As in one scene people comment about her:

A beautiful young woman all alone here. It's a crime.

Who's he talking about? - Malena Scordia, Nino's sexy new wife.

(12:45)

In the above dialogue Malena is presented as sex symbol, as objects and at the same time people want to pose her. She is described as 'sexy'. Malena is presented in the role of loose women. After the death of her husband she sleeps with many men. She does not care about the society. She is accused of sleeping with many men. One of them is Lt. Cadi. Her loose character can be found in her dialogue also. At the court scene she says, "I'm a widow, my business and that of Lt. Cadi are no concern of the law". She is loose in such a way that law can not binds her.

This movie appears to project traditional stereotypes of women, who are most often portrayed as victims of fabricated disasters. The depiction of women as victims of social circumstances or disasters exploits their vulnerability and their inability to act. Malena is unable to act because of her social circumstances. Malena is the victim of different social disasters. She suffers because it is said that her husband died in the war. In the movie females are most frequently portrayed as sex objects and as supportive wives/mothers, i. e. as defined by their relationships to men. This reflects the reinforcement of the stereotyped image of women prevailing in society. Women audience are encouraged to identify with these images, and to evaluate their roles accordingly.

This movie creates the boundary between occupations. When the movie opens the whole nation is preparing for the war. Men are preparing to go in the war. Men's role is to protect the nation. Whereas women have to limit themselves in domestic activities. Women cannot cross the boundary of their house. Malena's husband is male, so he has to go in the war but Malena is female so she has to limit herself in the household activities. In one scene Malena appears sewing cloth in her room. Other female characters also appear in the similar activities like that of Malena. In Renato's house too, Renato's father works in the office whereas Renato's mother limits herself in the household activities. Their roles as mothers and wives are emphasized and given precedence over their occupational or professional activities. In the movie female's physical beauty is emphasized. Wherever Malena goes Men follow her as if she is sea mistress. Her beauty is over emphasized in the film. Ceulemans and Fauconnier writes, in film "women's physical appearance is often stressed, even when it bears no relevance to the subject of the film story (29). In the movie too,

juxtaposition of Malena's beauty with the war seems unrelavant with the subject matter of the story.

Molly Haskell sees the degeneration of women's film images manifested in the celebration of male power and machismo, coupled with violence against, and the sexual exploitation of, women, and in the cinematic focus on all-male worlds.

Malena's image is created by all pervasive male gaze. There are many scenes where she suffers from violence. The lawyer who helps Malena in the court goes to Malena's house to fulfill his sexual lust. The lawyer rescues Malena only to have sex with her.

Women's liberation in film is generally equated with the exposure and sexual responsiveness of women to the men around them. Sexual deprivation is the major source of women's misery in the film. In the film it is shown that many other female characters are jealous of Malena's beauty. Other female characters are not happy because of their sexual deprivation. They suffer because they lack sexuality. In terms of sex Malena is happy, she is liberated because she has sexual power to attract men where as other females are sad because they do not pose sexual power. Ceulemans and Fauconnier comments that "in the film, females who do not have sexual exposure "are shown as emotionally empty, disintegrated, alienated and unfulfilled" (29).As in the film in comparison to Malena other female characters are shown emotionally empty.



Fig. 12 DVD Cover of the Movie

Emphasis on woman's physical appearance in the advertisements of movie is directed to both male and female audiences. Emphasis on eroticized body and close ups shots serve to present her fetishistically. The fact that her pose which is used on the poster does not hold a place in the movie where as the pose of Renato is taken from the movie very well proves the intention behind it. Mulvey talks about the function of eroticized female body in the movie. As she writes, “the eroticized pose of her on the poster, like in the movie, server for reducing her to a body whose function is first and foremost to be seen”(18). Thus, this advertisement appeals women watchers to be beautiful and as erotic as the heroine of the movie. But for the male audience this picture is an object of pleasure. This picture appeals to the male audience; beautiful, sexy woman as the ultimate reward for watching the movie. For Kilbourne, advertising is a form of socially ingrained propaganda—the most effective kind. In her work, she purports, “The most effective kind of propaganda is that which is not recognized as propaganda; because we think advertising is silly and trivial, we are less on guard, less critical, than we might otherwise be” (27). By advertising her erotic

look, it attracts male audience. In other words, the female form is constantly presented in film through the lens of the heterosexual male, that exist chiefly to give visual pleasure to the male viewer. Indeed, women in film exist indeed as simply a form first and foremost and an actual woman with independent motivations and desires second.



Fig. 13 Promo Picture of the Movie

The intention of showing her through a fetishistic strategy is also visible in the poster of the movie and also the promo photos of the movie. This figure is taken from the promo of the movie. It is designed to attract the male audiences. From this we can clearly say that she is posed in a completely eroticized way for the enjoyment of the male gaze. She is valued above all for what her appearance connotes, for her beauty and for her sexual desirability. Over her pose it is written “Monica Bellucci Sizzles”. Her erotic look is once again over emphasized by the words written on it. She is made the object of erotic contemplation which removes the threat and also provides enjoyment for the male gaze. As Featherstone writes:

Images of the body beautiful, openly sexual and associated with hedonism, leisure and display, emphasize the importance of appearance and the look. (170)

Through Fetishism and voyeurism, the male gaze functions as a control mechanism over her. As we clearly see, there are many aspects of constructing female as a sexualized spectacle. Camera shots, costume, make up, hairdo, director's intention, bill poster of the movie, press photo they all contribute to "the pre-determining how the woman is to be looked at"(Chaudhuri , 35). She is reduced to a passive spectacle position and to an image, fantasy, fear-mute, beautiful, objectified, obedient, and waiting to be demystified. Like it is written on the DVD cover of the movie "...A woman provokes sensual awakenings in a group of adolescent boys..." These words are directly appealing male heterosexual audience. This does not give space to the female spectators. This is designed only for the male audience.

III. Consequence of Male Gaze in *Malena*

This research concludes that the females under Male Gaze in the movie *Malena* have been eroticized and objectified. Most frequently, male gaze controls and dominates the female character. Under the male gaze, female's subjectivity is lost. It has analyzed the position of female under male gaze. It has attempted to show how female characters have been eroticized and objectified in the movie.

Malena is such an awesome character that wherever she goes men stares at her and makes lewd remarks under their breath and the camera follows suit, fetishizing her shoes, and then trailing up her long legs. Its thirteen year old narrator Renato Amoroso, one of the youngest in a pack of boys who spend much of his time by making explicit fantasies about the magnificent Malena, whose husband is fighting for Musolini. To Renato, however, she is more than an object of lustful fantasy. Malena's husband has been killed. No longer protected from male advances by her marital status, she becomes a fair game. Malena's extreme beauty becomes a curse after a local lawyer helps her clear her name from a jealous wife's lawsuit, he demands of her the only payment she can give. Malena is virtually forced into prostitution to survive. The women surround and pounce on her, beating, scratching and hurling insults until she is hounded out of town.

This study has found out the presence of male gaze in the movie *Malena*. In the movie either through the camera's look, character's look or by showing aesthetically complete female figure of female body exploits over female body. All the cinematic representation of female image proves in the movie there is prevalence of male gaze which eroticizes the female body. Male gaze is that 'panoptical surveillance' which creates certain notion of truth by imposing certain discourses. By these discursive constructions of gaze, male creates the rhetoric of domination upon

female. Since society is the product of human history, and since human history has been dominated by males, females are in the disadvantageous position in this regard. The basic idea is, female, especially female body, has been the source of pleasure in patriarchal society.

The analysis of the concrete example from the movie brought me conclusion that because of the male gaze the movie *Malena* fails to reflect or deal positively with the changes in sex-role perception and behavior occurring in contemporary society. The movie portrays the distorted image of woman. All the cinematic productions are responsible for the cause of this problem. Female roles in this movie is very limited in number and highly stereotyped. In the masculine world of, gangsters, espionage, war and violence, female remain in the background of the heroes' lives and are excluded from participation in the central action.

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