



UNQUEERING THE QUEER BODIES: *HOMOMORPHISM* AS A COUNTER RESISTANT MECHANISM AGAINST THE 'HETEROSEXUAL GAZE'

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ABSTRACT

Human race have always attached queerness to the lesser known, which however could be traced in its attempt to address the issues of alternate gender and sexuality. The hegemonic heterosexual community in order to homogenize heteronormativity have deliberately unaddressed the existence and essence of the homosexual communities. Whenever the queer body found a space in popular media or art, 'the heterosexual gaze' objectified and reduced them either as an object to be ridiculed or as beings who are driven by carnal desires. Often the queer bodies are misrepresented in mainstream media as they were heterosexual representations of homosexuals. Homomorphism, an art exhibition by five keralite queer artists explore the possibility of celebration of queer bodies, which scarcely have found its place in visual frames, thereby eradicate pseudo taboo and dismal notions attached with homosexual body and same sex love. This paper focuses on the counter resistant mechanisms employed by queer world in the realm of art by transforming their body as an active resistant tool rather than a passive ground of subjection to subvert the 'heterosexual gaze' into homosociality.

INTRODUCTION

Queer bodies often bear the scars of oppression, subjection and objectification, by hegemonic power structures of 'accepted genders'. The heteronormative society employed popular media to practice and propagate their dominant ideology, thereby establishing the 'normalcy'

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and 'monopoly' of the gender binaries. The body transcends from its physical identity to a stature of social resistance in the representations of the marginalised, as the dismally represented queer body blurred the reality behind the popular- conceived- distorted representation, since the queer representations in popular culture were heterosexual version of homosexuality, which attached queerness and mystery with the lesser known. By deliberately forbidding the gender and sexual minorities from indulging in artistic creation and expression, the essence underlying in the queer lives found no place in popular art or culture. The recent advancement in the field of queer representation unveils the double edged 'support' extended towards the empowerment for the queer, by labelling their representation as 'parallel art'. The pseudo morality of the heteronormative society however indulges in censoring and judging the queer artistic expression since the usual visual culture and psyche of the heterosexual audience are distributed by the realities of the queer lives (banning *Ka Bodyscapes*, a Malayalam gay movie, in 2016 IIFK could be cited as an example).

Laura Mulvian theory of male gaze could be placed in the homosexual- heterosexual binaries to define 'heterosexual gaze' on the queer bodies. The popular media have witnessed the sexualisation and objectification of queer body to evoke contempt and pity in the minds of heteronormative society by inducing homophobia to create the binaries of the 'normal' and the 'other', a neo gender discourse . Queer bodies thus undergo marginalisation along with the pseudo moral judgement of the society which attaches taboo and sin along with the homosexuality. The conceived dismayed images in the collective psyche of the gender binary society created by various institutions of heteronormative society try to strip the queer bodies out of their essence and individuality, often reducing them as 'carnally driven beings'. The queer bodies here become a site of hegemonic gender discrimination who are denied both geographical and intellectual space. The heterosexual community here occupies the position of a fascist dictator, by forcefully imparting a majority opinions upon the lesser privileged sections denying them a space to express their individuality and existence questioning the integrity of the democratic state.

Homomorphism, an art exhibition by five queer artists : Revathy V K, Nishad C A, Muhammed Zuhraji, Jijo Kuriakos and Anish held in Darbar Hall, Kochi intends to subvert the hegemony of heteronormative society attempting to unqueer the rainbow lives by unveiling the 'mysteries' and 'assumptions' entwined with sexual and gender minorities. The term homomorphism traces its origin from the Greek word '*homos*' meaning same and '*morphe*' meaning shape or forms justifies the objective of the exhibition. Jijo and Nishad employ the drawings to create a homosexual sensibility in the popular art, which is dominated by heterosexual embodiments and affection, as their work celebrate the gay beings who is tormented by the rigid repressive structures and their constant strives to assert their sexuality irrespective of the constant effort of the male dominated society to sweep same



sex love under the carpet. The recurring image of masked gay men in Nishad's painting could be traced as the artist's attempt to depict the double life that is force upon to every queer being in the fascist society. Muhammed Zuhrahi, the cover page designer of the controversial magazine 'Widerstand' in University of Pondicherry, employs the self portrait to explore the possibility of employing one's own body to emerge out as a strong resistance against the sexual tyranny which inflicts inferiority in the psyche of alternate gender and sexual minorities. Revathy effectively makes use of her photographic skills to depict the strong bonds of lesbian relationships and the emotional turmoil of falling out of the relationship which is stronger than falling in love through a series of lesbian photographs that freezes the same sex lovers in the metropolitan city. The attempt redefines the homosexual stereotyping as gay bodies being projecting as ' buttock grabbing effeminate men' as the artist projects the macho homosexual figures in its canvas crushing the age old distorted images. The exhibition elevates the stature of homosexuals to an elevated plane to be looked upon rather than being looked down upon by celebrating their body, romance, sexuality and identity. The queer artists lend a voice to the silenced sect of people by empowering them with the courage to stand for their divergent sexuality. The exhibition attempts to inculcate a novel homo friendly perception of art devoid hypocrisy and bias.

Homomorphism, could be traced as a counter resistant mechanism against 'heterosexual gaze' by equipping the queer body with a political resistance by transforming their body from being a passive plot of subjection to an active site of defensive mechanism. It employs body to subvert the dismayed distorted image that the popular media have propagated to ensure the monopoly of first and second sex. The series of painting explores the private life of queer lives giving glimpses on their physical intimacy and private moments, the works focuses on intimacy rather than love making of the same sex lovers, which is rarely discussed and depicted in popular culture, art and media. It encapsulated the spirit of bottled up emotions and feelings of a subaltern community who are denied a social space of respect and dignity. Unlike the disguised- implicit representations of the same sex love, homomorphism stands in its attempt to address the issues in its rawness, rather than refining it with the sophistication. Being a homosexual representation of homosexuality, the exhibition attains a greater height by factual and realistic depiction what is unknown or lesser known to the human race. Their works often question the heterosexual gaze by startling depiction of mating or love making, deliberately attempting to normalise the abnormal relationship. Through a series pictures a new homosocial culture is created which redefines the age old homophobic reception of queer art and culture. Homomorphism thus places itself as a counter resistant mechanism to unqueer the queer beings.



WORK CITED

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