

**A Comparative Study of Male Gaze versus Female Gaze: A Study of
Male Characters in Literature**

Dissertation

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by

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work presented in the Dissertation entitled **A Comparative Study of Male Gaze versus Female Gaze: A Study of Male Characters in Literature** being submitted to the Department of English, School of languages, Doon University, Dehradun for the award of Master in English is my original research work.

The Dissertation embodies the results of investigations, observations, and experiments carried out by me. I have neither plagiarized any part of the dissertation nor have submitted same work for the award of any other degree/diploma anywhere.

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SLE- 1264

Date: 30 July, 2022

Certificate

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled **A Comparative Study of Male Gaze versus Female Gaze: A Study of Male Characters in Literature** submitted by **Ms. Sindhu Khanduri** has been done under my supervision. It is also certified that the work in this Dissertation embodies original research and hard work of the candidate.

The assistance and support received during the course of investigation and all the sources of literature have been fully acknowledged.

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This research work is one of the first that I have undertaken, and it has been a rollercoaster ride for me. Although, the topic was an area that heavily interested me but the research work has not been easy. The agony of researching, writing, editing, and, most importantly, citation demonstrated why academic fields are not for everyone. But nevertheless, the journey was an educational and interesting one. I got to learn a lot more than I set out to learn. Going into the research, I expected to encounter certain ideas that were exposed to me, but this research has made me more curious to learn and read further. I read different authors; I was introduced to new theories and discovered new ideas.

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Abstract: -

The pressure to be something or someone has affected both the male and female members of our species. Laura Mulvey first mentioned the male theory in her essay "Visual Pleasures." The male gaze has not been kind to them either, and we see the result. The purpose of this paper is to answer the question: is there a difference in how male and female authors write male characters? Male gaze on female characters has been studied a lot. Male gaze on male characters has been studied through film studies. Male authors and their male characters have remained untouched. This paper will be mainly focused on two works: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde and *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen. Both works' texts will be compared, and the male gaze theory and feminist theory will be applied. The comparative study of these texts will show that the male gaze has perpetuated a stereotype of what a man and a gentleman should be. They have created a fear of the feminine and everything that is vulnerable in their audience.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: - Introduction	1-9
Chapter 2: - Study of Gaze in Literature	10-24
2.1 The Male Gaze and the representation of masculinity in <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i>	14-21
2.2 Female gaze on Men and Masculinity in <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	22-27
Chapter 3: -	
Conclusion	28-30
Bibliography	

Chapter 1

Introduction

"There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze that each individual under its weight will end by [internalising] to the point that they are their own overseer, each individual thus exercising surveillance over, and against themselves."

— *Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1980: 155)*

Simone de Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex*, said that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman". (Beauvoir, 293) This line encompasses the ideals of feminism and has propelled the ideals of feminism for years to come. The question of "what is a woman?" has plagued us for centuries. And in the process of answering that question, feminism has gone through a lot of changes. It has broken, deformed, transformed, and risen again. And these changes are evident through the different waves of feminism that followed the initial movement, which we could say started as early as the 3rd century BCE in the Roman empire. It was when Roman women protested against Marcus Porcius Cato's repeal of rules prohibiting women's usage of expensive products. And throughout history, there have been many singular voices against the inferior status of women. And with time, these voices collected and the first feminist philosopher emerged in the late 14th and early 15th century. Her name was Christine de Pisan. And so began the fight for equality in education, against oppression in marriage, equality in natural rights for both sexes, for the right to vote. Now the fight is for equality in job opportunity and pay, for their right to bodily autonomy, their safety, representation in art and media, and the fight continues. Feminism is both a movement and a theory. A theory that focuses on gender and its representation in culture and as a movement focuses on giving a platform to ask for equality and rights in society.

Feminists work on the assumption that gender roles are pre-decided and women are trained or brought in a way to fit into these roles of mother, sister, wife, or daughter. So, these traits in women were not seen as natural but rather as "social".

Sex and gender do not mean the same thing in feminist studies. This distinction was first made in the second wave of feminist thinking. This thought that gender and gender stereotypes were an idea of conformity and a social construct became a topic of dismay and trouble not only for feminist women but also for feminist men. As the idea and construct of masculinity and its oppression of men came to light, we saw the emergence of masculinity studies. "Masculinity studies is a significant outgrowth of feminist studies and an ally to its older sister in a complex and constantly shifting relationship." (Gardiner, 2002). The development of this study and the realisation among men that their individual construction is social and also includes a political construction, and the rise of groups that raised awareness about it, brought about a significant change in the relationship between men and feminism in the 1960's and 1970's.

Feminism today has been through multiple changes and development. It has evolved, developed, and strengthened, and it does not remain just a theory anymore, "implying a single and coherent trajectory of thought" (Waugh, 317). It has developed into a discourse that allows for discussion and the inclusion of multiple related ideas. And one of these related ideas is one introduced in the year 1975, known as the "Male Gaze Theory," in the essay titled *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* by Laura Mulvey, and the other one was the idea of masculinity.

Connell (2005) said that masculinity is placed on gender relations, a practise that involves men and women and has implications for real experience, character, and culture. And Baker (2007) said that masculinity is a form of constructed masculinity for men. So, like women, men are also brought up to fit into a role and mould and are not born masculine. Hence, it becomes a social construct like femininity. The construction of masculinity and its values are traditionally seen as

having power, courage, control, independence, male solidarity, and more such qualities. And it looked down upon anything that included interpersonal relationships, tenderness, communication, domestic life, women, children, etc.

In 1995, Connell released a book called "Masculinities" and it has been translated into 5 different languages. It was also released with an English second edition in 2005. In this book, Connell talked about masculinity and also different types of masculinity, and in a way, it's about hierarchy and what dominated the culture and society. Masculinity consists of four hierarchies, and they are: complicit, marginalised, subordinate, and hegemonic. This hierarchy also showed how some men dominated other men and also other genders. So, there was a hierarchy even within the "first" gender, i.e., men. The four levels are different in terms of their position in society and their characteristics.

First, complicit masculinity. This type of masculinity can be referred to as a skiver version of hegemonic masculinity. Masculinity is constructed in a way that makes men aware of the patriarchal divide and, in turn, they can get the benefit of being a man. This type of masculinity included men that were not the front-line runners for masculinity. For instance, baseball fans only need to watch the matches on TV or on the field; they do not have to play the game (Connell, 2005).

The second type of masculinity is that which is marginalised. According to Connell (2005), it relates to race and class relations. This transformation has occurred due to the social dynamic. An example of this is that a black man can be portrayed as an athletic star, a symbol of masculine strength and also as a criminal in a white-supremist context.

The third tier of masculinity would be subordinate masculinity. This masculinity is the opposite of hegemonic masculinity. These men do not have any quality of hegemonic masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity is often associated with dominance. Connell uses this masculinity to show how gay men are dominated and oppressed by other men. Hence, this masculinity is often referred to as "gay masculinity" or "homosexual masculinity."

The fourth and probably the most "valued" masculinity is hegemonic masculinity. It is often defined as "ideal" masculinity, as men in this category are dominant. They are more aware of the patriarchal divide and can often and mostly dominate people of other or weaker genders. It might include women, members of the LGBTQ+ community or even children.

These four types of masculinity not only brought out the hierarchy that exists because of the patriarchal divide between different genders but also between men. It also showed that men and masculinity were also social constructs and were and are forced to be and act a certain way. And this oppression usually comes from other men. In this paper, we will see how these four levels of masculinity become more clear and how different groups of men dominate and try to mould each other. When compared to female gaze and female gaze on masculinity, the male gaze is frequently unaware of these oppressions.

Laura Mulvey is a British feminist film theorist, who is a professor of 'Film and Media Studies' at Birkbeck College, London. In her essay, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, she introduced the idea of the male gaze. Mulvey borrowed from Freud's idea, which he discussed in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905)*. She used the idea of 'scopophilia', which Freud associates with "taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze". And for Mulvey, such pleasures can be created in the cinema:

But the mass of mainstream film, and the conventions within which it has consciously evolved, portray a hermetically sealed world which unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience, producing for them a sense of separation and playing on their voyeuristic fantasy. Moreover, the extreme

contrast between the darkness in the auditorium (which also isolates the spectators from one another) and the brilliance of the shifting patterns of light and shade on the screen helps to promote the illusion of voyeuristic separation. Although the film is really being shown, is there to be seen, conditions of screening and narrative conventions give the spectator an illusion of looking in on a private world.

(Mulvey, 17)

Mulvey took the example of the 1954 movie "Rear Window" by Alfred Hitchcock to discuss male gaze theory, applying terms of Freud's psychoanalysis to analyse the camera angles, narrative choice, and even the props used in the movie. She, through her analysis, showed that the film lacked and was unable to show or represent women as individual human beings.

Mulvey focused her work on film theory; as for literary criticism, it has helped us draw attention to a lot of metaphorical and literal gazes. Whether it be the gaze of one character on another, or the narrator's on the same character's actions, the gaze of the author or the gaze of the reader. The introduction of the theory of gaze has made us more self-aware and self-conscious. It has also forced us to realise that looking serves more purposes than merely information collection "signals complicity in or opposition to unequal power relationships in our world" (Waugh, 517).

This also raises the question of the female gaze, of whether it exists or not. The response is inconclusive as it is still a concept under construction. The question of the female gaze has only arisen post-the questioning of the male gaze. The thought that a female audience and consumer have their own point of view was, and sometimes still is, an ignored concept. And in literature, it is a less explored area. The contrast between the two gazes in this paper will be done through comparing, contrasting, and analysing the text of two works: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde and *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen.

Oscar Wilde, full name Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde, was born on October 16, 1854 in Dublin, Ireland. An Anglo-Irish couple welcomed him as the second of their three children. His mother used to write poems under her pen name "Speranza", which in Italian means "hope". She used to write poems for Young Irelanders and was a lifetime Irish nationalist. She used to read poetry to her children, which led them to love these poets. In 1855, the family relocated to No. 1 Merrion Square. The new house was much larger owing to the success of the parents, and their home became a site of a "unique medical and cultural milieu." Guests at their salon included Sheridan Le Fanu, Charles Lever, George Petrie, Isaac Butt, William Rowan Hamilton, and Samuel Ferguson. (Sandulescu, 53).

Wilde was home schooled till the age of nine. He was taught French and German by his French nursemaid and German governess, respectively. Then he joined Portora Royal School in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh. Wilde claimed that he was a school prodigy, despite being less popular than his older brother. He was considered a genius for his ability to speed read. He claimed he could read 2 facing pages simultaneously and consume three-volume books in half an hour and retain enough to tell the plot (Ellmann, 22). He won a prize for his ability to translate Greek and Latin orally, and he was one of three students who received a Royal School scholarship to Trinity in 1871.

His preface to the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was a reply to all the critics who had denounced the idea of immortality and the un-healthiness of the story, after it first appeared in the Lippincott's Monthly Magazine. He wrote in his reply, "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all. " (Wilde, 7). Although, Wilde in his essays talked about individualism and self-realisation as a route to a happier, richer life and a just society, Dorian in the novel follows a path of self-indulgence, objectification of others, and hedonism. But this novel could be seen as a peer into Wilde's own double life and maybe his anticipation of his own downfall. Wilde's aestheticism is summarised by a statement made by

Dorian in the novel, "Ugliness was the one reality" (Wilde, 199). It showed Wilde's love for what was beautiful yet his fascination with the profane.

Jane Austen was born on the 16th December 1775 in Steventon, Hampshire. She was born a month late and her father talked about it in a letter, that her mother "certainly expected to have been brought to bed a month ago" (Le Faye, 27). Her family had a humble background, and she was one of four children. The eldest of the lot was given up as he was developmentally disabled. Her family had an "open, amused, easy intellectual" atmosphere and the opinions of those they might disagree with, socially or politically, were considered and discussed (Honan, 211-212). She used to go to church regularly, interact with her friends and neighbours, and she often read novels aloud to her family, usually of her own composition.

Austen and her sister Cassandra to Oxford to study under Mrs. Ann Cawley and when she relocated to Southampton a year later, she brought them with her. However, both the girls were sent back in the coming autumn as they caught typhus. And after that, she was home schooled until her sister and she, in 1785, were sent to a boarding school in Reading at the Reading Abbey Girls' School. They came back before December of 1786, as their parents were not able to afford the fees. Since 1786, Austen "never lived anywhere beyond the bounds of her immediate family environment" (Le Faye, 52). The remainder of her education was done at home by reading under the guidance of her father and her two brothers, James and Henry. With the exception of the few letters, she sent and the biographical notes her family wrote, little is known about Austen's life. Her sister Cassandra destroyed much of the bulk of Austen's letters as she wanted to ensure that "younger nieces did not read any of Jane Austen's sometimes acid or forthright comments on neighbours or family members." (Nokes, 1; Le Faye, 33)

The novel *Pride and Prejudice* was first published in the year 1813, in the form of three novels anonymously. The first print of the novel sold out within the first year, and this book has never

been out of print since then. The book, which was initially titled "First Impressions," was the second of the four novels she published during her lifetime. The book was criticised for its lack of proper historical context. In the novel, the characters remained unaffected by any events happening outside their social bubble, which in a way depicts the enclosed social world Austen lived in. The book and its characters captivated its readers, and one of the reasons could be the potential for a happy ending.

The idea of the male gaze theory, although new, has been used a lot to study female characters. First used in film studies, it was used to study the male gaze of male script writers, cameramen, and directors. Due to this study, the objectification of female characters, actors, and bodies became more apparent. Feminist activists focused on and questioned the portrayal of women and also their part in the script. This focus drew the questioning gaze to literature. The main point that surfaced showed that the female characters were nothing but mere props in the text, something replaceable and that did not have much effect on the plot of the novel. The male gaze on female characters has been studied, examined, and scrutinised. But it's time to change the focus.

The male gaze on male characters has not been kind as well. It has been as cruel, uptight, and oppressive as ever. The study of male gaze on male characters in film studies has revealed that films written by men are "where men are portrayed as aggressive, masculine characters." (Bhatia) and female writers seem to do an improved job at writing for men. The male characters are more true, raw and real. The field of literature has not dove into this analysis much.

This paper will use the Male Gaze theory and, through the analysis through comparison, the conclusion will be drawn that men lack in the role of writing male characters. For so long, patriarchy has promoted toxic masculinity through art and the media, leading men to believe that this concept of a "man" is desirable. This idea not only results in a lack of literature, but also in a generation of men who are estranged from their own selves.

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Chapter 2

The Study of Gaze in Literature.

The guilt that women carry is not a natural one; the guilt has been loaded onto the backs of these women by society. Society, in refusing and refuting certain traits and responsibilities of men, has unloaded these traits onto women. The world is socialised in such a way that the patriarchal gap becomes more visible and this gap becomes beneficial to men. Certain traits and roles that women are supposed to be born into, bred into, and play are not natural but rather social constructs. These social constructs seem to benefit the males of our species. But this differentiation has existed for a long time, and there seems to be no evidence as to why and when this differentiation came to be. "The differentiation of sexes is taken as a given from the start" (Beauvoir, 23). And by establishing itself as the superior in this differentiation, the male has devalued the female. As soon as a group puts itself as the 'one', it automatically puts the second group as the 'other'. This concept is known as the concept of alterity, "no group ever defines itself as One without immediately setting up the Other opposite self" (Beauvoir, 6).

The concept of relativity explains that the 'Other' does not define itself but rather the 'One' in defining itself defines the Other. No subject chooses to be the subordinate; it is assigned to that role. And in doing so, it submits to some subordination and submission. This is where the belief that the "perfect" woman is submissive and the "perfect" man is a dominant man is developed. And these standing points are a given in society. "The passage from the state of Nature to a state of Culture is defined by man's ability to think biological relations as systems of oppositions; duality, alterations, oppositions, and symmetry, whether occurring is defined or less clear form, are not so much phenomena to explain as fundamental and immediate givens of social reality." (Levi-Strauss, 78-92). These realities become a given, the position of a man or woman becomes a given, and so do the roles that they are assigned. A woman is born, brought up and almost always

prepared her whole life for the role of a mother. A woman not wanting, accepting, or playing that role is seen as abnormal or someone to be repaired. "It is through motherhood that a woman fully achieves her physiological destiny; that is her 'natural' vocation, since her whole organism is directed towards the perpetuation of the species" (Beauvoir, 537)

This position is not natural, but a social construct, and it is given to either gender through society. And the position of women and their roles have been questioned. The binary of men and women has only been questioned by the female side, while the male side has remained unquestioned. The societal position given to them has remained as it is.

I used to get annoyed in abstract discussions to hear men tell me: "You think such and such a thing because you're a woman." But I know my only defence is to answer, "I think it because it is true," thereby eliminating my subjectivity; it was out of the question to answer, "And you think the contrary because you are a man," because it is understood that being a man is not a particularity; a man is in his right by virtue of being man; it is the woman who is in the wrong (Beauvoir, 5)

The patriarchy and the male privilege remain unquestioned. This societal position remains questioned. Women have been forced into multiple roles by the same society. Then the question arises of then who is the society? If man is the one that has provided the attributes to women, then the answer shows that it is men who are the ones who make up this society. They build and assign these societal roles to women and men alike.

The pressure of having to be a certain way is not only felt by women but also by men. Men view and expect other men to be, look and behave in a certain way, think a certain way, like certain things, and fully fulfil this role of being a man that they are born into. Masculinity has remained unquestioned, and now people are starting to question it. "Men are not born with the nature of masculinity. "Naturally, masculinity is formed by culture." (Baker, 2007), a man with

the virtue of being a man remains unquestioned. But, since these are socially constructed roles, what would the natural form be?

In certain ways, the male gaze has objectified men as well, in trying to suppress women. Their objectification of women has turned men into objects of lust and want, devoid of feelings and love. This idea of masculinity has done more harm than good. Men are expected to hide their feelings, be aggressive, be dominant and always be active. Passivity, a false idea, has been assumed for women, and the lie has been perpetuated. Freud also talked about this passivity when he talked about female sexuality. Beauvoir talks about how this false idea has been spread by many thinkers over different ages. In doing so, a fear of passivity and anything feminine has been created.

“Aristotle imagined that the foetus was produced by the meeting of the sperm and the menses: in this symbiosis, woman just provided passive material, while the male principle is strength, activity, movement, and life. Hippocrates’ doctrine also recognized two types of seeds, a weak or female one, and a strong one, which was male. Aristotelian theory was perpetuated throughout the Middle Ages and down to the modern period.” (Beauvoir, 25)

The male gaze shows these traits as being superior and attractive, and most of the time, this does not seem to be the case. The male gaze has not only objectified and belittled women, but it has also put a certain type of masculinity on a pedestal and negated any other qualities that might be attached to masculinity or men. The concept of toxic masculinity also rises from this point of view. Hegemonic masculinity has been put on a pedestal and anything differing from it is seen as a danger and something to be eliminated and villainised. This becomes more apparent when we observe the characters written by men. The fear of femininity, passivity, and any threat to hegemonic masculinity is always shown in a negative light, as something to be either repaired or disposed of.

The Male Gaze and the representation of masculinity in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: -

When viewed through the male gaze, masculinity is more about domination and oppression. Like "one is not born a woman but becomes one" (Beauvoir, 293), the same idea and philosophy can be applied to men as well. As with women, what a man should be and act like is a social construct. Gender in itself is a social construct. Feminist theory calls for this differentiation in sex and gender. Sex is biological, but the meaning, values, and roles assigned to men and women due to it are just social constructs. Since biology and sex are related to nature, then gender becomes a social construct. "'Female' and 'male' refer to the biological (anatomical and physiological) characteristics, while 'feminine' and 'masculine' refer to the social values assigned to these" (Nayar, 89).

The male gaze is usually studied for its objectification and sexualizing of women. It works in a way that empowers men and oppresses women in society. But that gaze has also oppressed men in numerous ways. Masculinity has been viewed through the male gaze, and the idea of masculinity has oppressed the gender it is made for. Male authors have also pushed this idea of masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, in many ways. Oscar Wilde did the same thing with his characters in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The main perpetrator in this novel is Lord Henry Wotton, who not only wants to promote his brand of masculinity but also finds others interesting because of this interest in them as "experiments". "(...) whether Dorian Gray was passing through a similar experience. He had merely shot an arrow into the air. Had it hit the mark? How fascinating the lad was!" (Wilde, 28).

Throughout the novel, Wotton makes many remarks, proposes many theories and ideas, and most of the time, his end result is to see if there is a reaction in Dorian. Wotton seems to have this extreme desire to shape Dorian according to his wishes and wants. He expects Dorian to behave in a certain way and to also react in a certain way. Wotton appears to represent society at these

points, and society shapes Dorian. And with time, Dorian desires the acceptance of this society. The desire for acceptance takes various forms; acceptance in the way he thinks; of the person he loves; and also, of the person he is. The male gaze that Wotton represents starts objectifying everything. And since this is seen as superior, other characters seem to want to accept and assimilate the idea. "Lord Henry Wotton is perfectly right. Youth is the only thing worth having. When I find that I am growing old, I shall kill myself." (Wilde, 34)

Wotton also refers to Dorian as an object, as the male gaze objectifies women in order to suppress them. The same is done by Wotton in the case of Dorian. Wotton sees Dorian as an object, something to be experimented on and suppressed. In the novel, Wotton becomes the image of a hegemonic masculine male, and everything and everyone around him is manipulated and suppressed by him. He manipulates situations and conditions in such a way that the conclusion one comes to is the one he wants. The male gaze shows this manipulative characteristic as charming or being a smooth talker. The same idea is passed down to Dorian.

"There was something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence. No other activity was like it. To project one's soul into some gracious form, and let it tarry there for a moment; to hear one's own intellectual views echoed back to one with all the added music of passion and youth; to convey one's temperament into another as though it were a subtle fluid or a strange perfume: there was a real joy in that—perhaps the most satisfying joy left to us in an age so limited and vulgar as our own, an age grossly carnal in its pleasures, and grossly common in its aims.... He was a marvellous type, too, this lad, whom by so curious a chance he had met in Basil's studio, or could be fashioned into a marvellous type, at any rate." (Wilde, 44).

One of the major ideas of masculinity that is perpetuated is the position of a man. Man is at the top of the food chain, not humans. And with this idea comes a massive ego, the male ego. A

young woman is always told to not hurt a man's ego as this ego is very big and very fragile. Even to this day, men still find it hard to believe that they can be denied something, especially if they feel that the one denying them is someone, they believe is below them. They cannot believe that a woman or even a man they believe is below them in position, power, or characteristics can refuse them.

Henry visits his uncle, Lord Fermor, to ask about Dorian and his family. At that time, his uncle mentions Dorian's mother, Margaret Devereux, and how she refused a man. A man who any girl would love to have, according to Lord Fermor. "Carlington went on his knees to her. He told me so himself. She laughed at him, and there wasn't a girl in London at that time who wasn't after him." (Wilde, 42). This behaviour is described as almost foolish, because a man who was popular proposed to her, and she said no. When a woman refuses a man of status, a status that makes them desirable to other women, the male pride suffers. This thought reflects that they see women as lacking individuality—as not being humans with different wants and likes but rather a group. group in which if one thing is desirable, it is to be desired by everyone and nobody should be refused. Dorian's mother is seen as "She was a romantic, though." (Wilde, 42). This opinion is formed because she married someone she loved, not someone society thought was suitable for her.

The male becomes more important than an individual's opinion. Also, the idea that someone who is in touch with their emotions and desires is seen as "romantic." The term "romantic" here is used in a derogatory manner, as someone who is emotional is not able to decide what is good and bad for them but rather goes with their feelings. The fact that a man decides what is good and bad for a woman is a red flag enough. The desire to control a situation or a person stems from the idea that a man must have all solutions, be in control, and dominate all situations. "A man must keep calm in various situations, not showing emotions which are identical with weakness." (Sholichah, 19). The male gaze has romanticised this idea and shown it as something to be desired.

Throughout the novel and even as an author, Wilde believed in not revealing the artist behind the art. The fear of facing one's feeling through one's own hand is a big challenge. The question arises is this because of the idea that art should dominate or a way of hiding the real feelings behind any art? This philosophy of hiding feelings and trying to avoid the nitty gritty of life is reflected in the novel as well "One should sympathize with the colour, the beauty, the joy of life. The less said about life's sores, the better." (Wilde, 48). The male gaze turns this trait to show that men are more logical and in life emotions are just a hurdle rather than showing it as being apathetic, "The advantage of the emotions is that they lead us astray, and the advantage of science is that it is not emotional." (Wilde, 48). The "leading astray" properties of emotions is seen as advantageous, but whom is it advantageous? If emotions are leading us astray what could be really advantageous for us. It suggests this trait is advantageous in some way. When one is astray or troubled to topple one is much easier and that serves as an advantage.

This weakness is found in women character in the novel. Here these emotions are not the advantage but the thing that puts women at a disadvantageous situation. Emotions, for a long time have been as something to be controlled and suppressed. A reaction that happens, that only damages us. This reaction is most seen in women. Keeping in mind, these reactions happen in women, "Besides, women were better suited to bear sorrow than men. They lived on their emotions. They only thought of their emotions." (Wilde, 99). Women are not seen as someone in control of these reactions because women is passive. Feminine is passivity. "(...) Laura Mulvey follows Freud in identifying activity with masculinity and passivity with femininity." (Oliver, 451). This passivity is seen as dominating space.

Dorian represents this domination by loving someone as innocent as Sybil. He does not tell her much about himself, but he is seen as "Prince Charming" by her. Sybil becomes a symbol for this passive feminine in the novel. Even when Dorian attacks her for her acting and insults her, she still begs him to stay. The mysterious aura the aggression and the domination is seen as attractive.

It is even validated by showing that she is the defaulter because she could not satisfy his expectation. And that too in front of people he is trying to impress. Dorian brings Henry Wotton and Basil Hallward to show off his lady interest. And is deeply disappointed because his pride and position has been hurt “You make yourself ridiculous. My friends were bored. I was bored.” (Wilde, 94).

The objectification of women is one of the primary traits of the masculine gaze. Lord Henry is quick to put everything in its proper perspective; every connection is assessed in terms of its benefits and drawbacks as well as what he stands to gain from each one. Wotton is quick to objectify individuals, connections, and consequently, emotions. He distinguishes between the person in the picture and "the original of the artwork" even after meeting Dorian (Wilde, 37). Even with Basil Wotton maintains a space between them, he doesn't specify their connection or where they stand.

“You really must not say things like that before Dorian, Harry.”

“Before which Dorian? The one who is pouring out tea for us, or the one in the picture?” (Wilde, 36)

Even though Wotton has known Basil long enough and but this want to objectify, to distance and dominate does not seem to go away for him. Basil although not an easy target, sometimes gets influenced by Wotton’s garb of words and talked in his theories. The want to dominate trumps every relation and this not only romanticised by Wilde but it’s may times seen as something admirable. At the end of any argument all Basil can really do is shout as he loses often in these discussions.

“I should think it was, Harry. But according to your category I must be merely an acquaintance.”

“My dear old Basil, you are much more than an acquaintance.”

“And much less than a friend. A sort of brother, I suppose?”

“Oh, brothers! I don’t care for brothers. My elder brother won’t die, and my younger brothers seem never to do anything else.”

“Harry!” exclaimed Hallward, frowning.

“My dear fellow, I am not quite serious. But I can’t help detesting my relations. (...)” (Wilde, 16).

The goal of society is to mould everyone into a predetermined mould. This is Wotton's desire as well. Being the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity, he strives to mould those who he perceives as beneath him. Dorian is susceptible to being persuaded, and in an effort to win Henry over, he tends to agree with much of what he says. What constitutes a man is one of these basic concepts. The harmful effects of masculine gaze are made further clearer in this portrayal of masculinity. He persuades Dorian to not be emotional about Sybil’s death and even persuades him to not go and meet her mother after Sybil’s death. When consoling Dorian, Wotton reifies life and death as art and literature.

In order to have control over Dorian’s emotions and reactions, Wotton objectifies life and emotions for him. He even asks Dorian to "not get yourself mixed up in it" (Wilde, 106). Dorian confesses to Wotton that although the tragedy has happened, it has affected him deeply, emotionally he remains unmoved. Wotton says that it does not affect him as a Greek tragedy would because sometimes death gives us "the impression of brute force, and we revolt against that." (Wilde, 108). The idea that a death has to be beautiful and artistic enough to evoke emotions seems overly cold.

A common theme running through the novel is that men revolve at the centre of the novel; “My dear boy, no woman is a genius. Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly. Women represent the triumph of matter over mind, just as men

represent the triumph of mind over morals.” (Wilde, 56). The female characters could have been replaced and the story would not have changed. When discussing male gaze, Laura Mulvey raised the point that female characters in films had no effect on the script. A female character could have been easily replaced, and it would have made no difference. And the same issue arises in the novel. The female characters are replaceable and their existence matters only in relation to the men. The Bechdel test evaluates how well women are portrayed in fiction. It inquires as to whether a piece of literature has at least two female characters who converse about topics other than males. Sometimes it is also necessary to name the two ladies. Although many female characters are named, they only revolve around the men, and their individual existence makes no difference.

The fear of femininity, passivity, and even homosexuality is evident in the novel. Wilde had tried to keep his sexual preference under wraps as well. He married and even had two sons, but his affair with a man was later revealed. But in the novel, rather than sympathising with the feelings and the struggle, he portrays them in a negative light. Many reviewers see Basil's fondness for Dorian as a physical attraction. It almost seems ludicrous to think that a guy might appreciate another without feeling sexually attracted to him. The male gaze also casts a bad light on Basil's interest if one were to assume that it was sexual. He is shown as a lesser man and his trait to be in touch with his emotions is seen as weak.

The book makes an effort to champion a particular kind of masculinity in every manner. The masculine character in the book espouses oppression and dominance, brutality, and apathy. Wotton makes every effort to make his creation, Dorian, into the kind of guy he thinks a man ought to be. In doing so, he feels successful and superior, and he gets his amusement from it. Instead of portraying this as a guy being conniving and oppressive, the male gaze has portrayed it as being classy and sophisticated.

Female gaze on Men and Masculinity in *Pride and Prejudice*

Austen shifts the paradigm of masculinity in *Pride and Prejudice* by employing the feminine gaze, placing Elizabeth Bennet as the sexual subject and Darcy as the object of desire.

Furthermore, Darcy and Elizabeth are treated equally as a result of the gaze dynamics since they both seek and are desired at the same time. Austen promotes a progressive kind of masculinity where men are competent and ready to adapt to their lovers' needs while women are not subservient and sexually or emotionally passive. She does this through the use of the female gaze in her works.

But because Austen's distinctive brand of masculinity is constantly founded on the needs and desires of women, more equality between men and women is necessary in order to properly read her works, which Sarah Ailwood refers to as a "social reconstruction of gender" (Ailwood, 11). A "new man" must be developed in order to respond to women's desire for "equality, mutual respect, and social and political participation," (Ailwood, 11) as suggested by Ailwood. This reformation of gender roles inevitably enables the need for the development of a "new woman" who is capable of entering a marriage of equality and who can sustain a successful but loving household. "Male sexuality in Austen's novels, though palpable, in no way requires female passivity; rather, it develops out of and in response to the wants and needs of women" (Malone, 70).

At work, the female gaze is evident in how males are not objectified and how a new kind of man is emerging. Furthermore, the feminine gaze is used by her characters to convey their needs and wishes towards the male characters. As a result, readers themselves view masculinity and masculine characters from a female gaze. Her heroes' masculinity is shaped in large part by the feminine gaze. The visual culture of the gaze is explicitly enacted in Austen's writings, long before feminist and theoretical arguments even began.

The portrayal of Austen's universe rests on women, and her storylines and characters centre on this feminine perspective. She also completely depends on the gazes of women for the sexual growth of her male characters. Without Elizabeth's descriptions of Darcy, who would Darcy be? The character is not imaginable and would not hold the same charm without the female gaze representing it. The male characters are not raised on a pedestal, their flaws are pointed out, and there is character growth. Unlike in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Dorian continues to live his life as he pleases, no matter the effect of his actions on the people around him. Austen gives his character space to grow and make mistakes. The male characters are able to adapt to women's expectations and desires. Darcy changes as the story progresses. Mr. Darcy is the first male character to purposefully change for a woman because he really and truly loves Elizabeth and because of his knowledge of his defects and desire to change in order to become the man Elizabeth might adore. However, this willingness was not admired in men when looked at from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity. Because many ties include being comfortable with the feminine.

When Darcy is first introduced to Elizabeth, he does not see her as an object but simply as a physical entity and individual. "His "gaze," if it can be called such in these opening scenes, is detached and objective." (Malone, 74). And even when he starts being attracted to Elizabeth, he is attracted to her "fine eyes" (Austen, 19), and it is not just because her eyes are beautiful but also because they are expressive. They make him "wish to know more of her" (Austen, 16). The difference becomes more evident, and the desire arises from the want to know more, not wanting to possess or just simply physical attraction.

Because they were created by a female author and then seen through the perspective of female characters, Austen's male characters are distinctive. The skilful use of free indirect language by Austen allows for this style of portrayal. Through it, the reader is not constrained by the viewpoints of a single character or the prejudices of an omniscient narrator, but rather, thanks to

Austen's fluid narration, the audience learns about the motivations of all of her characters, male and female. Although the author provides us with a point of view of Darcy, the point remains that he is made by a woman and hence influenced by the female gaze. His gaze is written by a female and is interpreted by multiple female characters. The gaze itself is filtered, and the characters are viewed through a multi-layered female gaze.

Giving characters multiple points of view makes them appear more round and complete. The view is not just influenced by the female gaze of the author, but the character is also able to describe himself. Rather than an omniscient author giving a summary of a character, different perspectives allow us to see that one trait can have both negative and positive effects. Through exposure to these several levels of vision that are mostly female, the reader gains a more complete understanding of his character. In this way, these ladies help the viewer understand Darcy as a sexual being.

Darcy is also one of the first few male characters that not only changed because of a woman but, in doing so, we also saw his own flaws. The female gaze does not make the male a god-like and flawless creature, but rather human. A human that has flaws and shortcomings. The male characters understand their wants, desires, and feelings. The feelings are not simply stuffed in a corner by them. Although at the beginning of the novel, Darcy and Elizabeth are seen as rivals and not interested in one another, as time goes by, they discover each other's charms. Darcy accepts this change; he accepts that he does want to get to know Elizabeth. Darcy is also willing to chase after Elizabeth.

One of the most famous expository lines of the novel is "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (Austen, 1). By saying that it is men who want women and not the other way around, Austen flips the binary of male and female. And this is even evident in the way the male characters pursue the female

characters in the novel. This reality, which Austen never forgets, does not totally disprove Mulvey's claims about women's subjugation. Female characters like Caroline Bingley demonstrate the level of sexual power that a woman can exercise by taking advantage of the patriarchal nature of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century courtship practices, while male characters like Darcy and Wickham demonstrate that the female gaze does exist, carrying with it all the "power of action and possession" of the male gaze (Kaplan, 121).

In a society where women's words are not given as much importance, the gaze becomes important. The novel revolves more around Elizabeth's desires than it does around Darcy. Darcy is seen as being influenced by this gaze and affected by it. Female perceptions are thus effective sexual instruments for Austen. In a culture where social rules jealously preserve the spoken word, the look transforms into a formidable means of conveying prohibited desires. Given how closely regulated all other forms of contact between the sexes are, looks and glances constitute a kind of unrestricted communication. The "ocular drama" that is Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship is defined by this connection through the eyes, as elegantly put by Mark Hennelly.

When Elizabeth reads Darcy's letter, she realises she has feelings for him. The opening up and entrance of Elizabeth into Darcy's private space and a view into his thoughts is what really solidifies her feelings for him. This happens when she visits his home and talks to him one-on-one. Female emotions are not viewed as a sign of weakness. But the truth and emotional intimacy seem to work like a trump card. In the novel, the way that male characters interact with each other is not seen as an exchange of power but rather highlights their friendship. They look out for each other and do not try to mould one according to another. The hierarchy of masculinity does not exist in the female gaze and leads to the formation of a new man.

All these qualities are seemingly modern in a nineteenth century novel, even now when the media and advertisements seem to be promoting the idea of hegemonic masculinity. The 1980s

saw the growth of the "new man," a sensitive individual in touch with his feminine, emotional side, in reaction to an increase in feminist critiques of the malestream. Here was a less conventional masculinity that let men engage in traditionally feminine activities like parenting and housework while still appearing to preserve their manhood (Segal 1993). Austen was able to present this new man at a much earlier time.

The female gaze has turned out to be much more kind and understanding to men as compared to the male gaze. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Dorian, who became self-obsessed, snobby and made some completely ridiculous decisions, was in a way sympathised with and shown as a victim. In *Pride and Prejudice*, these same traits turn Mr. William Collins into a snobbish character. Instead of highlighting flaws in male characters, the male gaze depicts them as victims of some kind. Darcy's attitude and aloofness are mysterious and do attract Elizabeth and other women, but they also see the problem with this trait. His negatives are not glossed over and he is given a chance to rectify them.

Male gaze sees the world in black and white most of the time. The female gaze embraces the fifty shades of grey that lie in between. Male gaze sees characters as good for them or bad for them; above them or below them; and gives them no space to grow. The female gaze also sees the negatives and positives but is accepting of change. Male eyes perceive this change as dangerous. Dorian is afraid of his face changing and instead decides that he needs to hide this change, and when he cannot, he decides to end his life. Change is intimidating as it questions the position of men.

Even when the idea of a new man emerged in the media as a reaction to it, it was the emergence of this macho, no feelings, muscled out over masculine man. This idea and image have been promoted and gained traction, but only within the male community. This image in a way solidified their position in a way because this image gave the men an upper hand in physical

strength. Though the female gaze has not only accepted but is also attracted to the image of the new man. And this concept still manages to confuse the male audience.

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Chapter 3

Conclusion: -

This concludes this dissertation and, through this analysis, we were able to see the ideas perpetuated and forced onto men. In this society, which includes men of certain power and ideals, in an effort to solidify their position, these gendered roles have been formed. The patriarchal gap was created by men to have a certain position in life. But in doing so, they forget to take individuality into account. Men wanting to be any different from the hegemonic ideal were chastised and forced into a given role. From what roles they play in the family, to their clothes, thoughts, likes and dislikes, and even their sexual preferences are controlled.

The physical images for a man and a woman have been decided, and anything different from the prescribed form is negated. The idea of a "new man" can be described as a man of feeling and expression. This expression also bleeds into the appearance. From a young age, boys are pushed into roles. They should not have long hair, be athletic and interested in sports. They are exposed to violence with much more comfort than they are exposed to their feelings and how to deal with them. Looking after one's own self and appearance is to this day seen as being sissy. A man can look after their body in the form of working out, but taking care and attention to their skin, hair, nails, and facial hair is seen as something only gay men do.

Anything that is not overtly masculine is either feminine or homosexual. These divisions make it easy for men to justify their oppression and to, in a way, villainise these traits. But women desire these traits in men. They want a thinking, feeling man, and that threatens the patriarchal setup. Many men fail to see the reason for this attraction. And this confusion stems from their view that men should be hegemonically masculine. Take an example of male celebrities and characters that gain traction with women who are "men of feelings and expression". These are men who are at ease in their own skin, accepting both their masculine and feminine sides. So

really, the answer lies in the question itself. What makes these men attractive? It is their self-assurance and comfort in their own skin.

The male gaze has perpetuated the idea that men should be aloof, cold, calculating, and not overtly emotional. This in turn makes men seem like machines, not humans. They suppress their wants, desires, and feelings and that turns them into an explosion waiting to happen. A ticking bomb is not really attractive. The suppression and confusion that come with these ideals are exacerbated by male gaze. Men expect the world and the people around them to put them on a pedestal and accept them in a certain way, but with changing times, men see that the ideals they've worked so hard to imbibe lead them nowhere.

The female gaze has, on the other hand, romanticised feelings, faults, and growth. The men created and looked at from a female gaze challenge the idea of what "men ought to be". This creates a friction between these two ideas and leads to questioning. These questions are uncomfortable for patriarchal men and threaten their positions. In his novel, Wilde promotes these ideals. His male characters embody the characteristics of a hegemonic male. They are shown as being attractive because they are authoritative, have power, and authority, and if they are any different, they are oppressed and influenced to change. Wotton influences Dorian to change and also interacts with Dorian because he knows he can oppress him. Wotton sees him as a personal project rather than a friend and confidante.

In viewing her male characters through multiple female gazes, Austen gives them more depth and also more vulnerability. These men are not chest-beating, muscled-out men fighting one another to prove their dominance. But these men are thinking, feeling creatures, and their ability to accept their position and predetermined image while remaining open to change is what makes them appealing. created by Austen's ladies are presented. By her gaze, Elizabeth Bennet and

Darcy become equals in terms of emotions and sexuality; never passive, she shapes her lover to suit her own needs and desires. As a result, masculinity in Austen's works is adaptable and dynamic; Darcy is strong, seductive, and sensitive, but, most importantly, he wants to marry someone who is equal to him. Over the course of her work, Austen successfully rewrites masculinity.

This masculinity is attractive because of the way it gives equal ground to everyone. Women are not second-class creatures and men are not gods who make no mistakes. Hegemonic masculinity has put a lot of pressure on men. Men are forced into the role of providing just as women are forced into the role of being a nurturer. Beauvoir said that society believes that a woman completes her physiological destiny when she becomes a mother, but what about men? What is their physiological destiny according to society?

Men are forced to be earners, if they want to be nurturers or be more in the domestic space, they are still painted in a negative light. Masculinity pushes the idea that man is the supreme creature, but what supreme creature is this that has no control over how their lives pan out? Men are like those powerless puppets. It seems like they hold the strings, but they really do not. With the rise of the feminist movement and ideas, men have also found a voice for themselves as well. They have realised that they are just as oppressed, or maybe more oppressed, than women. I believe they are more oppressed in some ways because society does not see or acknowledge their oppression. Though much remains to be discovered in this area, as well as in the concept of masculinity. But the question of the representation of masculinity is gaining traction and attention. Patriarchy does not only hold women but also men in cages. The start of questioning patriarchy was started by women, but now men can start running with the baton.

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