

A comparative study of the depiction of paraphilic disorders in *Underpants thief* and *la pianiste*

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Paraphilic disorders are atypical sexual urges that lead to stress and harm for both the individual with disorders and others. World cinema has treated paraphilic disorders as a major trope in films like *Salo* and *Secretary*. Though Sri Lankan cinema has largely chosen not to depict paraphilic disorders, recent films like *Underpants Thief* have attempted to explore the experience of paraphilia. The objective of this research is to analyze how paraphilic individuals are portrayed in the two films *Underpants Thief* by Somaratne Dissanayake (2021) and *La Pianiste* by Micheal Haneke (2001). The research adopts a qualitative methodology. Accordingly, a comparative critical analysis of the two films was conducted with regard to the cinematic construction of the paraphilic protagonists and the societal reaction to paraphilic disorders as depicted in the films. The study reveals that the protagonist- Sam in *Underpants Thief* suffers from fetishism and frotteurism while Erica in *La Pianiste* suffers from sadomasochism, according to the DSM-5 classification. It is also noted that the depiction of disorder in *Underpants Thief* is problematized through the incorporation of intellectual disability into the characterization of the protagonist. Sam is presented in the light of a person with disabilities and the margins between paraphilia and intellectual disability seem to be blurred by an overambitious attempt at increased representation and inclusion which ultimately leads to confusion. *La Pianiste*, however, avoids such pitfalls and focuses on deviant sexuality. The characterization of Erica portrays the female protagonist as a socially and economically active individual which is in direct contrast with the marginalized socio-economic existence of Sam, prompting the idea that the marginalization of Sam may be caused by his intellectual disability. In terms of the reaction to paraphilic disorders depicted in the films, it can be seen that *Underpants Thief* preaches an 'ideal' societal reaction to paraphilic individuals whereas *La Pianiste* depicts a reaction that is commonly displayed by society towards them. The didactic 'ideal reaction' promulgated by the former is presented through the character of Nayani, Sam's sister-in-law while the societal reaction to paraphilia is embodied by Walter, Erica's partner in the latter. The didactic purpose brought out is further contributed by the characterization of Sam through which the director presents a white-washed and seemingly innocent paraphilic individual. Such a didactic notion is not depicted in *La Pianiste*. In contrast, Erica is presented as a multi-faceted character and the background provided in relation to her paraphilia facilitates a nuanced, in-depth reading of her character. Thus, based on the qualitative analysis conducted focusing on the plot, characterization, music, symbols, and settings, this research concludes that the construction of the paraphilic protagonists and the reaction to paraphilic disorders in the two films are vastly different.

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