True Vision

In the scene that I picked from "Scream", Sidney is on the phone with the killer, she cannot see him, but he can see her. She is on the porch talking to him on the phone, she hangs up, and locks door behind her. The killer pops out of a closet, they fight and she runs up to her room to get away. The killer gives up and her boyfriend shows up by coming through the window and embraces her. This scene is prevalent to Foucault’s essay through a closer look at Sabo’s essay in the excerpt where he talks about hierarchy of power and patriarchy. Foucault’s essay called “Pannopticism” claims that visibility is a trap, meaning that it can be seen as both a strength and a weakness. He comes describes this claim by using the example of the panopticon. A panopticon is way in which a prison is set up. The panoptic system of a prison is set up having a central tower in the middle and cells circling around it. In this set up, the person in the central tower has visibility of all the people in the cells and the people in the cells have no visibility whatsoever. This gives the person in the tower all power, while all the prisoners, who have no visibility, no power at all. In both the “Scream” scene and Sabo’s essay, gender inequality and gender difference is shown through a lens of hierarchy of male power and the power of visibility.

In the opening scene, we see gender difference at its finest. We see this gender difference in terms of a male being on the phone rather than a female being on a phone. This is extremely important because if Sidney were on the phone with a female, she surely would not have taken the phone call seriously, she would have taken it as a prank. Since the caller on the phone was male, the fear became a reality. Also, in terms of
visibility, since Sidney knew that the caller was a male and she could not see him, the fear remained. Without visibility of the male killer, it put her at a disadvantage, taking all power away from her and instilling fear and nervousness.

Another example of how the power of visibility is prevalent in the subject of gender difference and inequality is when the male in the suit jumps out of the closet and tries to kill Sidney. Sidney, still afraid, cannot see the face of the killer but since she knows it is a man, the fear does not leave. Even though Sidney now has visibility of whom the caller on the phone is, she cannot actually see “who” it is, so she gains no power from this false sense of more visibility. Also, the killer can now look eye to eye with Sidney rather than seeing her from a distance, so this enhanced visibility of the killer empowers him further since he can see her facial expressions and the fear in her eyes.

Looking at this part of a scene from another angle, we can look at Sabo’s essay where he talks about patriarchy and hierarchy of power. In his essay, Sabo says, talking about the pain principle, “… a chief disciplinarian in the patriarchal family, the father has the right to inflict pain.” (Sabo 427) This excerpt shows how it is okay in a patriarchal society for someone to inflict pain if the person doing the inflicting is a male. So, it is only right that the killer inflicting the pain/death in “Scream” and has the most hierarchal power and the power of visibility is a male.

Additionally, in the last thirty seconds of the scene, we see gender difference and inequality in terms of visibility at its greatest. In the last part of the scene, Sidney runs to her room and stops the door from opening just enough so that only the killer’s arm can get through. At this point she is scared for her life and trying to contact the police, then suddenly the killer is gone and her boyfriend comes out through the window. She runs to
him and he comforts her in his arms. In this part of the scene we see how the visibility of male has power over females. Sidney was just running from a man who was trying to kill her and is now suddenly comforted by the visibility of male. This shows that males have all the power when it comes to visibility because Sidney, a female, is both scared and comforted by the sight of man. If it was not her boyfriend who would have came through the window and was a girl friend instead, that surely would have made the situation worse. In this scenario we see gender difference. If it were her girl friend to come through the window, she would not have felt protection, she would have told her friend the situation and they both would have been scared of the male killer. We also see gender difference by tying in an excerpt from Sabo’s essay about male heroism. Sabo says, “Patriarchy’s mythos of heroism and its morality of power worship implant visions of ecstasy and masculine excellence…” (Sabo 427) The fact that Sidney is comforted in her boyfriend’s arms implies that males are protectors or heroes whereas females are not. Again, this shows the difference between the powers that being a man holds and the lack of power a female holds because males have the ability to give security but can also easily take it away.

Gender inequality and gender difference can both be seen in Scream and in Sabo’s essay by through the lens of the power of visibility and the power of male hierarchy. By looking at the first part of the scene we are shown that how visibility of the killer gives him power while the lack of vision gives Sidney the absence of power. Then when Sidney sees the killer’s mask, she knows that the killer is a male so her lack of visibility does not change, so she still does not gain any power. The killer gains more power by gaining even more visibility. In the last part of the scene the power of male
hierarchy become prevalent. We are shown males are given more power just because of the simple fact that they are males. In this scene Sidney is scared of the killer for the main reason that he is male, but is then comforted and feels protected by the sight of a male when her boyfriend shows up. This exemplifies how visibility can both be used as a strength and a weakness despite the fact that both the scary killer and the comforting boyfriend are both males.
Works Cited

