

The Aesthetics of Nudity: A Critical Examination of Its Role in *Love, Somebody*, and *A Killer Paradox*

Dissertation submitted to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, in partial fulfillment for the award of M.A. degree in English Language and Literature.



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## Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **The Aesthetics of Nudity: A Critical Examination of Its Role in Love, Somebody, and A Killer Paradox** is a bona fide record of sincere work done by Tiya Elizabeth Thomas, Register Number: 220011028702, Bharata Mata College, under my supervision and guidance and that no part of this thesis has been presented for the award of any degree, diploma, title, or recognition of this or any other university.

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## Declaration

I hereby affirm that the dissertation entitled **The Aesthetics of Nudity: A Critical Examination of Its Role in *Love, Somebody, and A Killer Paradox*** is a record of *bona fide* research work done by me under the guidance of Dr. Mini M Abraham, Assistant Professor, and that no part of this project has been presented earlier for the award of any degree, diploma, title, or recognition of this or any other university.

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## Introduction

Art has always been expressed through various forms. It exists in nature, and anything that exists can be considered an artistic presence. Artists capture the inherent art in nature, blend it with their emotions and intellectual creativity, and present it through various mediums such as painting, sculpture, music, poetry, and more. Recently, motion art has emerged as a prominent medium for artistic expression. Movies and series are dynamic creations resulting from the collaboration of numerous artists. A film or series represents the culmination of various art forms, involving actors, writers, cinematographers, directors, music producers, architects, and many others. These artists from diverse fields come together to create a masterpiece, presenting their collective artistic work in the form of motion pictures: movies, and series.

Nudity has extensively been used in various works of art with varying intents and responses. The term Nudity, popularly understood as "the state of being naked" (Hornby 1041), undergoes an artistic transformation within the realm of artistic expression. In this context, nudity extends beyond its mere physical meaning and becomes an artistic symbol of vulnerability, rawness, and unfiltered truth. Artists make use of nudity as a meaningful tool to capture their creations in their entirety, bringing quality into their work with a sense of completeness and authenticity. This element of naked representation is essential to bring out the aesthetic and holistic beauty of artistic ideas. Much like other artistic techniques, nudity conveys ideas in their purest form, preserving the artistic vision as it is.

The depiction of nudity as an art form has been prevalent since the early prehistoric era, manifested through various mediums such as painting and sculpture. However, the emergence and spread of religious beliefs, particularly Christianity, brought about a significant shift in the perception of nudity and the presentation of the human body. In this new framework, the body, particularly the female body, came to be viewed as a source of temptation and the root of sin. The

shift from the aesthetic aspect of art to the moral aspect raised questions about its potential effects on those who perceive it. This ideological shift led to a re-evaluation of nudity, with many considering it to be vulgar, disturbing, and even obscene. Consequently, nudity became a threat to the ethical and moral fabric of society, so the idea of censorship was put forward, resulting in the restriction and limitation of the creation and viewing of nude content, often marked as adult content.

Even with many limitations, many artists have continuously attempted to portray the aestheticism of nudity. The film industry serves as a medium through which artists can express their art. A movie is a collaborative effort involving various artists. The essence of nudity is captured through elements such as lighting, character portrayal, and direction. It is not merely a raw representation of the body, but a collective art bringing together beauty, emotion, and the language of the body. Despite censorship and other constraints, films strive to bring out the beauty and aesthetics of the human body.

This project attempts to study the nudity as depicted in three film/ series and attempts to view it primarily through the lens of Auteur theory. The texts selected for study the movie *Love* (2015), the Korean drama series *Somebody*, and a thriller series- *The Killer Paradox*. The project will make a close study of the text in order to explore the nudity as portrayed in these works. It investigates whether the nudity was included for titillating purposes or whether it was essential to the plotline. The question of aesthetics and morality will also be examined through the lens of Auteur theory, the artistic dimension as well as surrealism (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica).

Through such critical examination, the project aims to understand the aesthetics, politics and morality of nudity as portrayed in the selected works. The project also analyses how nudity has been used with different purpose, intent and impact in the works. The brief overview of the selected works is as follows:



*Love* (2015), is a fragmented, nonlinear erotic art film written and directed by Gaspar Noé. Through this movie, Noé attempts to intertwine emotions and physical pleasure through intimacy and passion between the characters, presented through various nude scenes. The film aims to define and capture the evolving emotions and dynamics of relationships, showcasing the significance of physical intimacy in shaping a connection.

The narrative centres on Murphy, an American expatriate in Paris, who becomes entangled in a passionate and complex relationship with Electra. Both characters are adventurous in their approach to sexual intimacy, leading them to explore various bedroom fantasies. They invite Omi, their attractive neighbor, into their bed to fulfill their sexual fantasies, unaware of the impact it will have on their relationship.

The director uses numerous nude scenes to emphasize the importance of intimacy. Each scene is distinct, capturing a unique aesthetic and emotional nuance through the presentation of nudity. The nudity in the movie is not merely a display of naked bodies and sexual acts for sensationalism. Instead, it seeks to convey the varied emotions experienced by the characters in a highly artistic manner. The film depicts sentimental sexuality, prioritizing the emotion of love and celebrating it through physical intimacy. Through this movie, nudity serves multiple layers of artistic expression. It represents the pleasure felt by the characters, acts as an ultimate celebration of intimacy and love, and serves as an artistic appreciation of the human body. Ultimately it conveys artistic pleasure to the audience through its visual presentation. The film is a visual aesthetic statement.

On the other hand, *Somebody* (2022), an eight-episode Korean Netflix thriller series directed by Jung Ji-woo, faced heavy criticism for its presentation of intimate and nude scenes. In Korea, a conservative country, especially regarding entertainment culture and viewership, the audience has a significant influence over the reception of artwork. When *Somebody* was released, netizens remarked that the intimate scenes were excessive for a K-drama, labelling them as

obscene and vulgar. However, it is unfair to describe or dismiss a series as completely vulgar without understanding the plot and the importance of these scenes.

The K-drama *Somebody* revolves around a serial killer, Seong Yun-o, who uses a dating app called Somebody to target his victims. Kim Sim, the developer of the app, communicates with the killer, and the plot progresses as their emotions and feelings develop through this communication. Their closeness, passion for each other, and their sexual and emotional connection are depicted through the nude and intimate scenes.

Despite the criticism for its explicit content, the series also includes graphic violence and murder scenes, which received little to no criticism. The nudity presented in the series was essential to capture the emotional development of the characters. These scenes are crucial parts of the plot, bringing the writer and director's aesthetic vision to life. They are necessary to maintain the creative flow, support character development, and provide aesthetic continuity to the storyline.

When it comes to the series *A Killer Paradox* (2024), a significant shift can be seen in the artistic purpose of nudity presentation. At first glance, it appears that the purpose of nudity shifts from "art in nudity" to "nudity in art," which seems to detract from the series' artistic integrity. However, upon deeper research and examination of the presentation's meaning and purpose, an important artistic intent is revealed, restoring the series' artistic and aesthetic quality.

Directed by Lee Chang-hee, *A Killer Paradox*, a dark comedy-crime thriller series that revolves around a depressed college student who accidentally becomes a serial killer due to his instincts to sense criminals. The series delves into the psychological aspects of crime, brilliantly capturing the internal struggle of the character Lee Tang, who struggles with conflicting personalities and searches for his identity through his morally complex journey.

The inclusion of a sex scene in the series was widely believed by viewers to add little artistic value or plot advancement. It was claimed that the nude scene appeared irrelevant and unnecessary, giving the impression that the director included nudity merely for the sake of it.

Many viewers found the scene out of place and questioned its necessity. On the surface, the nudity presentation lacked any discernible artistic purpose and seemed to fail in providing aesthetic or artistic pleasure.

However, when we look beyond a superficial analysis, the scene plays a significant role in enhancing the character's personality and exploring his moral and psychological depth. The director uses the scene to craft and mould the character's personality, ultimately contributing to the artistic value of the series.

In order to study the aspects of nudity, the project is structured as follows:

The introductory chapter touches upon the background and context of the study, introduces the selected works and the theoretical framework chosen for study. Chapter two of the study shifts its focus to the secondary texts, which incorporate major theories such as auteur theory blending with aesthetic emotions, along with the concepts of aestheticism and surrealism. These theories are utilized to examine how nudity functions as an aesthetic factor and how artists use it as a means of artistic expression. The ideas and debates of various theoreticians on this theory will serve as tools to analyse the topic of nudity in art. This chapter aims to theoretically substantiate the topic with existing knowledge.

Chapter three of this study focuses on the primary texts, which include three major shows: *Love, Somebody* and *A Killer Paradox*. These shows are introduced and examined in detail to explore the topic of nudity within the aesthetic realm. *Love* is a film about passion, fantasies, and emotions intertwined in a love triangle between Murphy, Electra, and Omi. It captures the essence of sentimental sexuality and the complexities of life. *Somebody* is a suspense thriller with elements of dark romance. The show portrays the intense intimacy and fantasies of a serial killer, Seong Yun-o, and a woman named Kim Sum, the developer of the app somebody, which the serial killer uses to target his victims. The dark fantasies are shown explicitly. *A Killer Paradox* revolves around Lee Tang, a college student suffering from depression and an existential crisis, who

accidentally becomes a serial killer after discovering his ability to sense criminals. This chapter aims to distinguish between "art in nudity" and "nudity in art" using these three shows as examples. *Love* represents visual aesthetics, *Somebody* enhances the plot by utilizing psychological and character aesthetics, and *A Killer Paradox*, initially criticized as an aesthetic failure, actually incorporates moral and psychological aesthetics, enriching the completeness of the characters. All three shows demonstrate how artists can present nudity aesthetically in the medium of film. It is also crucial to note how the incorporation of nude scenes in some films can result in artistic failure or violation. By analysing these shows, the study seeks to highlight the delicate balance between artistic nudity and gratuitous nudity.

Chapter four of the study integrates both primary and secondary texts to explore the artistic dimension presented through nudity. The examination involves analysing the three different shows as primary texts alongside the theories from secondary sources. These theories help define what constitutes art and how nude art can be considered as art rather than an obscene activity. The argument presented in the study utilizes the primary texts as examples, while the theories serve as pre-existing knowledge to support and provide a deeper perspective on the topic. This chapter aims to offer a comprehensive understanding by combining practical examples with theoretical frameworks.

The last chapter concludes the project.

## Chapter 2

### Understanding Nude Aesthetics: Theoretical Perspectives

"Art should be independent of all claptrap — should stand alone, and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism, and the like"-James Whistler (“Whistler Paintings, Bio, Ideas”)

Art is a concept that has continuously evolved over centuries, adapting and transforming its ideas and modes of presentation. It defies easy definition, encompassing a wide range of human activities and their resulting products. *The Oxford Dictionary* defines art as "the use of the imagination to express ideas or feelings, particularly in painting, drawing, or sculpture" (Hornby 71), highlighting its expressive and imaginative aspects. However, this definition barely scratches the surface of what art truly encompasses.

Art is not limited to traditional forms such as painting, drawing, and sculpture. It also includes modern and contemporary expressions, performances, installations, digital creations, and more. Art can be a noun representing the skill of creating objects, a verb denoting the act of making art, or a collective term for creative subjects studied at educational institutions. It also refers to the performing arts, which include theater, dance, and music, as well as the liberal arts, which encompass non-scientific subjects like history and literature. Despite these varied definitions and categories, art remains fundamentally about the expression of technical proficiency, beauty, emotional power, and conceptual ideas. It is an independent statement by the artist, a creative endeavor that communicates emotions, thoughts, and perspectives. This is why defining art is so challenging—it is an ever-changing landscape shaped by cultural, social, and individual influences. The diversity of art is further exemplified by its presentation through different mediums. It can be visual, auditory, or even conceptual, existing in silence and emptiness as much as in vibrant color and sound. Auditory art, such as music, engages the sense of hearing,

while visual art engages sight. Conceptual art challenges the viewer to think beyond the physical presentation and delve into the ideas behind the work. These varied forms underscore the idea that art cannot be confined to a single definition or medium.

The aesthetic factor of art—its beauty and emotional impact—is integral to its appreciation. To truly understand and connect with art, one must engage with the emotions it evokes. This connection goes beyond mere observation; it requires a profound engagement with the work. Art's power lies in its ability to transcend the ordinary and evoke deep emotional responses, creating a bond between the creator and the audience.

To understand the aesthetic in art, one needs to understand Aestheticism, one of the greatest art movements of the late 19th century, which emerged as a response to utilitarian social philosophies. Central to this movement was the slogan "Art for art's sake" or "l'art pour l'art" (Wikipedia contributors, "Art for Art's Sake"), expressing the idea that true art is completely independent of social values and utilitarian functions, whether didactic, moral, or political. This movement is believed to have been popularized by Benjamin Constant, Victor Cousin, and Théophile Gautier. Aestheticism treated art almost as a religion, worshipping the aesthetic value of art. It posited that the beauty of art alone was sufficient justification for its existence, without any need for external purposes or functions.

Aestheticism is closely related to the decadence and symbolism movements, representing a complete revaluation in the art field. Though revolutionary, its roots can be traced back to romantic writers and Pre-Raphaelite painters who preceded it. These earlier influences laid the groundwork for a movement that sought to free art from the constraints of practicality and moralism (Wikipedia contributors, "Aestheticism").

A key work that epitomizes the aesthetics ethos is Théophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, published in 1834. In this novel, Gautier articulates the "cult of beauty," famously

declaring that "nothing is really beautiful until it's useless." The story is told through letters from a young poet named d'Albert to his friend Silvio, aiming to share the unadulterated truth. In this book, Gautier highlights that beauty is valuable on its own, without needing to be useful. Aestheticism cherished beauty for its own sake, rejecting the idea that art should teach a lesson or have a moral purpose. This perspective marked a significant departure from previous art movements that often sought to convey social or political messages through their works. Instead, aesthetics believed that the power of art lay in its ability to evoke an emotional and sensory response purely through its form and composition. The Aesthetic Movement emphasized suggestion over statement, valuing sensuality and beauty while incorporating extensive use of symbols. *The Yellow Book* is famously known as the journal of the Aesthetic Movement, as it was devoted to aesthetics, literature, and art.

Oscar Wilde expanded on the theory of art in relation to truth and life in the preface to his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

The artist is the creator of beautiful things. To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim. The critic is he who can translate into another manner or a new material his impression of beautiful things. The highest as the lowest form of criticism is a mode of autobiography. Those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things are corrupt without being charming. This is a fault. Those who find beautiful meanings in beautiful things are the cultivated. For these there is hope. They are the elect to whom beautiful things mean only beauty. There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all. The nineteenth century dislike of realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass. The nineteenth century dislike of romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in a glass. The moral life of man forms part of the subject-matter of the artist, but the morality of art consists in the perfect use of an imperfect

medium. No artist desires to prove anything. Even things that are true can be proved. No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style. No artist is ever morbid. The artist can express everything (Wilde).

The philosophy of art explores the nature of art through concepts such as interpretation, representation, expression, and form. In parallel, aesthetics, which focuses on the nature of beauty and taste, serves as a critical framework within this study. Aesthetics examines how aesthetic value is shaped by critical judgments and acts as a "critical reflection on art, culture, and nature". The term "aesthetics" was introduced in the 18th century to denote a theory of beauty and, more broadly, the study of perception, deriving from the Greek word "aisthesis," which means perception. Previously, the concept of beauty had been discussed but lacked the specific focus on perception that the term "aesthetics" later provided. Immanuel Kant was the first philosopher to give aesthetics a major role in a system of philosophy. The philosophy of art focuses on understanding the processes through which artists conceive, create, and present their works, as well as how audiences engage with, appreciate, and critique art. In contrast, aesthetics examines the reasons behind our preferences for certain artworks over others and explores how art impacts our emotions and beliefs. Both fields aim to define what art is and what constitutes good art.

The relationship between aesthetics and morality is a complex and often contentious topic. In 2000, at a museum in Denmark, artist Marco Evaristti debuted a controversial work of art involving live goldfish swimming in vessels full of water, which were electric blenders.

Evaristti named his display "Helena" and invited museum patrons to turn on the blenders if they desired. Eventually, someone did, resulting in the fish being blended. Evaristti explained that his work was designed to sort people into three categories: sadists, if they wanted to push the button; moralists, if they were upset by the exhibit; and voyeurs if they



enjoyed watching others' reactions. However, many argued that Evaristti's goldfish blenders were not art at all (*Art and Electronic Media Online Companion*).

The controversy surrounding "Helena" highlighted the differing views on whether art can be morally scrutinized. The relationship between morality and art is a topic of ongoing debate. The work of Marco Evaristti, for instance, raises significant moral questions. Some, referred to as autonomists, argue that art is completely detached from moral considerations and immune to ethical critique, while others, known as aesthetic moralists, contend that morality and art are intertwined, asserting that any moral shortcomings in art undermine its aesthetic value. Despite these differing views, the intersection of art and morality continues to offer rich opportunities for philosophical exploration.

“Surrealism, a 20th-century art and cultural movement, is closely linked to art and aesthetics. Influenced by Sigmund Freud” (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica), surrealism is characterized by its focus on the bizarre, irrational, and dream-like elements. The movement aimed to liberate individuals across all forms of art, politics, literature, and visual expression. Freud believed that dreams are a direct expression of the unconscious mind, revealing our deepest desires, thoughts, and fears. Surrealism is both ambitious and complex. The term "surrealism" was first used by French poet Guillaume Apollinaire in 1917 to describe creations of the imagination that go beyond merely imitating nature.

In the realm of cinema, surrealism presents a modernist approach to art and entertainment. Surrealist films do not simply retell dreams or stories but recreate the processes through illogical, irrational disruptions and unsettling imagery, unrestrained by conventional consciousness or morality. Surrealists believed that discovering meanings beyond the rational mind could free us from the constraints of the mundane and logical, potentially revealing truths more profound than reality itself.

The connection between art, aesthetics, and morality extends to the realm of emotions. Art's ability to evoke strong emotions is a key aspect. Aristotle introduced the concept of catharsis, which explains why people are drawn to emotionally intense art. Catharsis refers to the emotional release or purification experienced during a tragic or disturbing work. This concept underscores art's capacity to offer a safe space for experiencing and expressing deep emotions.

Contemporary American philosopher Kendall Walton suggests that the emotions we experience in response to art are "quasi-emotions"—emotionally resonant responses evoked by fictional scenarios, but not as intense as genuine emotions. On the other hand, Philosopher Noel Carroll asserts that we can engage deeply with fictional characters and situations, and have real emotions, suggesting that our thoughts and emotions toward them are as valid as those toward real people, regardless of whether they align with external reality.

Aesthetic value is shaped by critical evaluations of artistic taste, which assess the beauty and impact of creative works. Aesthetics functions as a lens through which we critically reflect on art, culture, and nature, exploring how these elements influence human experience and judgment.

“Emotions can be categorized into two types: real emotions and aesthetic emotions. Real-life emotions are chaotic, deeply personal, confusing, and often uncomfortable” (Measuring Aesthetic Emotions). People might not fully understand why they feel certain emotions in specific situations. These are the raw, unfiltered emotions we experience daily. In contrast, aesthetic emotions are felt through art. When an artist evokes empathy in the viewer, allowing them to engage with the artwork on a different level, it results in an aesthetic emotional experience. Aesthetic emotions are beautiful and controlled; they are not chaotic. Instead, they are deeply felt with a clear understanding of their origins. An artist can craft aesthetic emotions, guiding the viewer's feelings and leading them into new emotional experiences.

Aesthetic emotions, which we experience when enjoying art, have a few key features. These emotions are strong and specific, always involving an appreciation of the artwork. Different aesthetic emotions are linked to various types of beauty. They influence how much we enjoy or dislike the art, affecting our pleasure or discomfort during the experience. Aesthetic emotions play a significant role in shaping our overall opinion of the art, helping us decide whether we like or dislike it.

What makes aesthetic emotions unique is that they don't drive us to take practical actions, unlike fear in real life. For example, fear from a scary movie doesn't make us run away because we know it's just fiction. Philosophers and psychologists study how art evokes real emotions and explore concepts like the "paradox of fiction," which examines why we have strong feelings about fictional stories even though we know they aren't real.

Now coming to the main theory that will be utilized to analyze the show: the "Auteur Theory." While a film or show is a collaborative effort involving various artists, this theory posits that the director is the true "author" of the film. It highlights the director's unique artistic vision and the way they express their point of view, significantly impacting the artistic creation. This theory reflects upon the director's unique artistic vision. According to this theory:

A movie by a particular filmmaker will have recognizable elements like themes and visual styles etc. as a signature style. This is like a statement that tell the audience who the director is and show a consistent artistic identity across their films. The term "Auteur Theory" comes from critics of the French film journal *Cahiers du Cinéma*, many of whom later became directors of the French New Wave. However, New York University professor Julian Cornell points out that the idea existed before; the Cahiers critics just refined it (Hustle).

According to the theory an auteur who's work is instantly recognised. If a director can associate with certain characteristics- color palettes, highly stylized symmetry, and particular narrative style etc. This theory show directors often get personal about their thoughts and it's evidently presented through their work. This theory show being an auteur involves developing a distinctive artistic style that reflects the director's unique voice and consistently working within that creative realm. Their personality must resonate in a way that connects with the audience, and regardless of the story or genre, they leave a recognizable mark on every project.

Thus, this theory is essential to see how directors use nudity in their own personal style to achieve different motives and show the various ways nudity can be seen in the artistic realm. It examines how nudity takes different forms in each director's personal artistic view and how different emotions are brought out through the director's artistic perspective. It's like each director has a particular artistic purpose.

Finally the exploration of art and aestheticism through the various theories discussed will provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of nudity in artistic expression. By applying these theoretical frameworks, particularly the Auteur Theory, we aim to delve into how directors' unique artistic visions influence the portrayal of nudity in films and shows. The Auteur Theory will serve as the focal point for analyzing how directors use their personal style, including elements like surrealism, to present nudity in ways that evoke specific emotions and reflect their artistic perspective. Additionally, by examining how aesthetic emotions are evoked and how aestheticism is employed, we will assess the effectiveness of different artistic approaches to nudity. This theoretical framework will thus reveal the practical success and diverse artistic interpretations of nudity across various works, highlighting the nuanced ways in which different artists engage with this element in their creative expressions.

### Chapter 3

#### The Aesthetic Expressions of Nudity in *Love*, *Somebody*, and *A Killer Paradox*

In the genre of nude art in motion pictures, *Love* (2015) stands as a notable example. This erotic drama art film was written and directed by the renowned Argentine-French filmmaker Gaspar Noé. His body of work is often described as a "New Extreme Films" (Wikipedia contributors, "Gaspar Noé"), characterized by its association with sexual and violent imagery. Tim Palmer has referred to Noé's films as "cinéma du corps," or "cinema of the body" (Wikipedia contributors, "Gaspar Noé"). *Love*, with a runtime of 2 hours and 14 minutes, is considered Noé's warmest and most personal work, as it is semi-autobiographical. It premiered at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival and was released in 3D, gaining notoriety for its unstimulated sex scenes. The film received mixed reviews, with some critics acknowledging its depiction of "sentimental sexuality" (Kang), while others were shocked by its graphic sexual content, particularly the opening sex scene. Examining *Love* in terms of artistic and aesthetic depth, alongside the significance of nudity, the film incorporates more than 15 nude and intimate scenes. The movie begins with a sex scene between the two protagonists, Murphy and Electra. Murphy, portrayed by Karl Glusman, embodies writer-director Noé himself as an American student living in Paris. Through Murphy, Noé showcases his passion as both a lover and an artist. In one scene at a party, Murphy expresses to Electra, his French girlfriend played by Aomi Muyock, and Paula, another girl, his desire to create cinema that portrays "authentic human sexuality" (Lehrer) – the very essence of *Love* itself. He articulates his aspiration to make movies infused with passion, stating, "I want to make movies out of blood, sperm, and tears. This is the essence of life" (*Love* 56:00–56:05). These lines emphasize that the movie should be viewed through the passionate and artistic lens of the filmmaker.

Discussing the movie's plot and its artistic blend with nudity, *Love* presents its storyline in a non-linear way. The story is narrated from the perspective of Murphy, the protagonist. The

timeline jumps between past and present, wandering through memories and flashbacks. These elements blend seamlessly with the artistic presentation of scenes, incorporating great cinematography that makes the nude scenes artistic and aesthetic from every angle. The movie opens with an intimate nude scene between Murphy and Electra. This opening scene acts as a statement of the union between art and nudity. It is abrupt and may initially cause cultural shock with its pornographic appearance, yet it contains a profound essence of emotion. The scene is presented almost like a still picture, with very slow movements, making the characters resemble a sculpture or painted artwork. Accompanied by slow music and the minimalistic setting of a bedroom with natural light, the focus remains on the characters and their slow, rhythmic movements to the music in the background. This scene suddenly transitions to the present, where Murphy receives a call, bringing him back to his reality with his wife and son.

The abrupt transition to the present occurs when Murphy receives a call from Nora, Electra's mother, informing him that Electra has been missing for over two months, and there is no information about her daughter. Electra had been in a suicidal mood. Thinking about his time with Electra, Murphy realizes that it has been two years since everything changed. He misses her and wants to be with her. He recalls the time he got his wife, Omi, pregnant and how that ruined everything. Memories of Electra flood his mind, including their plans to have children together. The scene shifts to a memory of an intimate moment with Electra when she asks him, "Can you show me how done you can be?" (*Love*), the passion and desire for each other are vividly portrayed in this particular scene. Both characters are deeply in love, and the setting, enhanced with soft red lighting and a minimalist design, intensifies the emotions and heat between them. A fitting musical beat plays in the background, perfectly capturing the atmosphere. The vulnerability of the characters is projected through their nudity, while emotions are given colour through the lighting and music. The scene continues with Murphy asking Electra, "What is your ultimate fantasy?" She replies, "To fuck another girl with you" (*Love*), and they describe the ideal girl: a

blonde, pretty and nice. This segment showcases their complete openness with each other, both mentally and physically. The connection between their bodies and minds is very clear in this scene. In this space, there is no room for shame; they share their secrets and explore their desires freely. Their passion, love, and trust for each other are captured through this one nude scene, illustrating their deep bond.

The major shift in the plot occurs when Omi, a 16-year-old blonde, becomes Murphy and Electra's neighbour. Murphy and Electra invite Omi to hang out with them and later join them in bed. This sequence is captured by director No e, transitioning seamlessly from a DJ club with red lighting to a bedroom in soft yellow light. The colour gradually changes from peach to orange, reflecting the evolving mood and emotions. The sensual scene in this segment clearly depicts the moods, feelings, intentions, interests, and passions of all three characters, especially through their body language. This segment contrasts love and lust in a very cinematic and artistic manner. As the three characters engage with each other, the differences in their intentions become clear. The changes in lighting, positions, touches, and interactions within the scene enhance this contrast between love and lust.

Murphy jumps back to the present reality and then returns to the memory where he messed things up by having an affair with Omi while Electra was away. The intimacy in this scene is purely out of lust, presented in a very minimalistic, colourless setting in a white bedroom. He wanders between the present and the past, regretting his mistakes and crying desperately to be with Electra. He felt secure and vulnerable with her, remembering not only their physical connection but also the passions, dreams, and secrets they shared. He was in love.

Then, fragments of his memory shift to a major one: his first big mistake. At a party, he was talking to a woman about his passion for making movies about love and sex, blaming Electra for being bored and not understanding his vision. He then proceeds to get physical with the woman in the washroom. This scene is depicted in green light, capturing his lust, unfaithfulness,

and irrational sexual desires. From then on, their relationship experiences ups and downs, especially when Electra confronts him about the affair and acknowledges that she has also cheated on him with her ex-boyfriend. After a long, difficult path, they decide to forgive each other, protect each other, and stay together.

To overcome jealousy, greed, and insecurity, Murphy takes Electra to a sex club on the advice of a police officer he befriended. The club is bathed in red and purple light, with multiple rooms where people engage in various intimate acts. Electra's engagement with others in physical intimacy makes Murphy more insecure and possessive, realizing he cannot share her with anyone. They are bonded too strongly and are addicted to each other. Murphy then recalls how he met Electra for the first time, and how he fell in love with her at first sight. During their first encounter, he asked her, "What is the meaning of life?" and she replied, "Love" (*Love*). Their bond was defined from that very first meeting. He longs to return to those precious moments with her. In the present, he suffers in the pain of these memories, questioning his existence without Electra in his life.

The movie ends with a heartbreaking scene of Murphy breaking down and crying in the washroom, lighted in a soft yellow light, capturing the memory of Electra through the lighting and his expressed pain. The entry of his son, Gaspar, into the bathroom through the yellow door symbolizes hope, bringing him back to reality but also making him think about the baby he could have had with Electra. Murphy breaks down even more emotionally, and as he hugs his son, it feels like he is hugging Electra in his memory. The very last segment of the scene is presented as a picture of two lovers hugging each other tightly. It looks like a painting, painted in all red, symbolizing love, separation, pain, and memory.

The success of the movie lies in its artistic presentation of nude intimate scenes, creatively imbuing them with purpose and meaning. Unlike conventional romantic films, which often draw a clear line between romance and sexuality, *Love* blurs these boundaries, portraying love and desire



as inseparable in both their sublimity and vulgarity. Cinema, as Slavoj Žižek describes it, is "the ultimate pervert art" (Žižek) because it doesn't directly satisfy our desires but rather manipulates them. In this context, *Love* manipulates our perceptions of love, desire, and the human experience, leaving viewers to struggle with their own interpretations and reactions.

The second text is *Somebody* or *썬마디* is a South Korean psycho-thriller drama that blends romance, transcending conventional expectations. Written by Jung Ji-woo and Han Ji-wan, and directed by Jung Ji-woo, it was released on Netflix in 2022 with eight episodes. The plot centers on Kim Sum, played by Kang Hae Lim, a young girl exceptionally talented in coding and algorithms. She is recruited by a man to manipulate the lottery machines at his exclusive gaming parlour. She successfully does so and receives a large sum of money in exchange, which she uses to prepare for an upcoming youth programming competition. Kim Sum's talent is eventually noticed by a woman who is impressed by the AI chatbot she created, called "Someone." This chatbot has a unique characteristic: it records every text that users type, even those deleted before sending. Kim explains that the data is color-coded to represent the emotions and personality traits of users based on their interactions in the chatroom.

A few years later, Kim Sum and Samantha collaborate to launch a dating app named *Somebody*, based on Kim's chatbot. Kim Sum, who suffers from Asperger's syndrome- a condition that makes it difficult for her to express emotions-is extremely lonely. Her closest friend is the first chatbot she created. Around the same time, the Korean police administration approaches the company for cooperation in investigating the murders of two individuals. Both victims had been using the app *Somebody* and met someone through it before their deaths. The police request chat records, but the company refuses to provide them, as disclosing any personal information related to their app is against their policy. Although the company does not cooperate, Kim Sum takes up the issue and decides to investigate privately.

Kim Sum engages in personal chats with matches on the app. At that moment, a stray cat is hit by a car on the road in front of her house. She shares this with the men she is chatting with, and one of them, Seong Yun-O played by Kim Young Kwang, an architectural designer, encourages her to kill the cat. By the end of the first episode, it is revealed that Seong Yun-O is the murderer who targets women he meets through the dating app, killing them during physical intimacy. The last scene of the episode depicts him killing a woman in a bathtub while both of them are naked. Examining the artistic and aesthetic factors in these scenes, it becomes evident that the nude scenes are indeed necessary. They serve as a means to present the psychotic nature of the character and the pleasure he derives from his actions. Unlike most other women he meets using the Somebody app, he is not interested in killing Kim. At their first meeting, they realize that they are different from everyone else and understand each other. He gives Kim a blade, which she holds dearly.

Kim is more invested in her relationship with Seong, while Seong continues to target new victims through the app. In episode 7, Seong's past is revealed, showing where his obsession with killing began. A year ago, Seong started using the Somebody dating app and connected with a woman who invited him to a hotel room. She mentioned wanting to invite a third man to join them. This intimate scene highlights Seong's lustful nature and becomes crucial in presenting his character development and how this sexual encounter awakened a new fantasy for him. Before the third man arrived, Seong and the woman became physically involved, and she asked him to choke her. Experiencing such pleasure for the first time, Seong, a well-built man, went overboard and accidentally murdered the woman. When the third man arrived shortly after, Seong killed him too. This first murder thrilled him, and killing became an addiction.

Seong is attracted to Kim because he believes she is just like him—someone who finds pleasure in killing. While chatting with her personal chatbot, Someone, it is revealed that Kim once told the bot she experienced euphoria while killing someone. This confession happens in

episode 4 when Kim receives a message from someone with a similar condition, asking to meet her at an office building after dark. This person also messages four or five other men, telling them a woman wanted to experience a rape role-play. Unaware of this setup, Kim finds herself trapped in the building with these men and kills one of them in self-defence. Later in the series, Kim discovers that it was Seong who had lured her to the place using a fake ID. This incident turned him on and increased his attraction to her.

Kim Sum has two estranged best friends: Young Gi-Eun, a disabled police officer, played by Kim Soo-Yeon, and Mok-Won, a shaman played by Kim Yong-ji. Young Gi-Eun uses somebody app hoping to meet someone who would accept her despite her physical disabilities. She meets a man who claims he is also disabled and uses a wheelchair like her. When they meet, she realizes that this man is not disabled and is, in fact, Seong Yun-O. He convinces her that he lied so she wouldn't feel uncomfortable meeting him, and she stays for the date. Later, they have sex, and he abandons her in an isolated place away from the city. He doesn't kill her because he believes she is too weak to be worth killing, and the thought of killing a half-paralyzed woman doesn't excite him. This incident is shown in episode 3. The intimacy in this segment is emotionless and lacks interest, more out of pity than genuine desire.

To find the person who abandoned her, Young Gi-Eun and Mok-Won meet up with Kim. Over time, they begin to suspect that Young's attacker and Kim's new boyfriend are the same man. They ask for Kim's help to find this attacker, but Kim refuses, to protect her boyfriend. Towards the end, she even lies to her friends after realizing that her boyfriend is indeed the one who attacked Young.

Seong eventually confesses his crimes and his true love to Kim. In episode 5, Seong asks, "Do you know what my hobby is?" and Kim answers, "Yeah. I know it all. You said it's murder. Do you want to go around killing people with me?" (*Somebody*). This excites him, and they proceed to have sex. This shows how deeply Kim affects him and how she turns him on.

However, Kim soon understands that her love for Seong would not lead to anything comfortable or constructive. She chooses to handle things herself. She plans to meet him at a new house being designed by Seong for them. As Seong sits and waits there, he receives a video call from Kim, which is actually an AI program. While Seong confesses his love for Kim and his desire to be with her, someone runs a sharp blade through his eye, leaving him to die in a pool of blood. This person is Kim. She returns to her office, plays a video game with her colleagues, and laughs at her victory.

The beauty of this drama lies in its artistic presentation of the plot, delving deeply into the character's psychology and sexuality. The nudity becomes an element or tool to shape the plot by giving an artistic flow through the emotions and psychology of the characters. The viewers are able to understand the characters more closely by seeing what these intimate, raw nude scenes try to convey, which is more than just obscenity. The nudity portrayed in this series is essential for the plot, bringing out the completeness of the characters and illustrating how they respond physically to their psychological abnormalities. Director Jung Ji-woo said in a group media interview

"If a 29+ rating exists, I want to become a director who makes such a movie. I think detailed descriptions of damaged bodies were limited, while the relations and human minds behind the scenes were really provocative. I couldn't leave out those parts" (Eun-Jung)

Coming to the next work, *A Killer Paradox* or *살인자ㅇ난감* is an eight episode long crime thriller dark comedy Korean series directed by Lee Chang-hee featuring Korea's two prominent A-list celebrities, Choi Woo-shik and Son Suk-ku, two prominent actors in the Korean entertainment industry. The series was released in 2024 on Netflix. The story is based on a webtoon named *Kkomabi*, which follows a man who accidentally turns into a serial killer. The drama was a major hit on Netflix globally but received criticism for the unnecessary inclusion of nudity.

*A Killer Paradox* starts with Lee Tang, portrayed by Choi Woo-shik, who has recently been discharged from the military and is now a college student with a part-time job at a store. He leads a depressing life and feels unfulfilled, dreaming of escaping to Canada to be amidst the mountains. One day, while working at his part-time job, a drunk man enters the store and causes a scene, but his friend apologizes and they leave. Later, Tang sees the drunk man lying down with his friend walking away, unconcerned. When Tang stops him, the man starts hitting him. In self-defense, Tang grabs a hammer and attacks the man. A blind woman with her dog walks past him, causing Tang to panic and go home to take a shower. He later remembered that he left the hammer at the scene.

Detective Jan Nan-gam, played by Son Suk-ku, takes on the case and begins investigating the crime scene. During the investigation, it is revealed that the victim, Myeong-jin, whose real name is Yeo Bu-il, has a previous criminal record. The blind woman turns out to not be entirely blind. She demands 2 million won from him every month to keep his secret and she had the hammer which he had used to kill. Angered, Tang kills her. During the investigation, the forensics team finds no significant evidence as the scene is covered in dog drool. Inside her house, they discover skeletons, revealing that the lady was a criminal. Later, two troublesome boys attack a cop and decide to loot. Tang, upon seeing them wandering, somehow realizes that they have hurt somebody. In the next scene, two bodies are dumped somewhere.

In the first two episodes, the series effectively builds Tang's character. However, there is a controversial scene in the first episode where Tang experiences a surreal hallucination in which he is engaged in intimate relations with a naked woman, while he remains clothed in his T-shirt. The woman's identity remains unknown throughout the series. The woman is naked while Tang has his T-shirt on. Viewers were disappointed by the inclusion of this unnecessary scene, as they believed it did not enhance the plot or contribute to character development.

Detectives Yong-jae and Nam-gam attend the funeral of a boy who, along with his friends, raped a girl named Kang Yeon-seo, leading to her tragic suicide. Yeon-seo's father, Sang-muk, claims responsibility for killing the boys, but Nam-gam discerns his deception. Meanwhile, a drunk prosecutor gets into a car with a man wearing an 'OnlyforHeroes' jacket, only to be found dead in a river later on. Nam-gam confronts Roh Bin, a meticulous ex-murder suspect, streaming the encounter as a precaution. Roh Bin then finds Tang, disclosing his identity as "OnlyforHeroes", and offers him a partnership and resources to combat wrongdoing.

Roh Bin creates a new identity for Tang as Gyeong-su, and he begins working in a Busan supermarket. Gyeong-su and Gyeong-a, who has undergone plastic surgery to evade recognition after a leaked sex tape, work together. Gyeong-a reconnects with her school friend Sang-min, starting a relationship with him, only to discover he is engaged. Sang-min kills her when confronted, and Tang learns of her death upon hearing about a fire. Former police officer Song Chon, forces Sang-min to confess before killing him. Nam-gam witnesses Song Chon leaving the scene, prompting Roh Bin to inform the police of his involvement in the Busan fire.

As events unfold, the police find CCTV footage of Tang, Roh Bin, and Song Chon, leading to the discovery of Song Chon's confession notes. Media reports label Song Chon, Roh Bin, and Tang as accomplices. Song Chon arranges to meet Roh Bin at a factory, prompting Roh Bin and Tang to devise a plan to split up, with Tang obtaining a new passport. Roh Bin offers Nam-gam Song Chon's location in exchange for cooperation. At the factory, Song Chon becomes excited when he sees Nam-gam. In the confrontation, Song Chon accidentally kills Roh Bin. Tang intervenes, stabbing Song Chon. Tang flees the country but is later apprehended for using a fake passport, leaving the officer puzzled due to his lack of prior criminal records

The criticism received for this k-drama warrants a closer examination. Despite the show's global success, viewers have been unsettled by the brief sex scene, questioning its necessity. A deeper analysis reveals that this scene serves a significant artistic purpose, transcending surface-

level perceptions. It is essential to understand the director's intentions and the scene's role in unveiling the character's psychological and moral complexities. This moment is pivotal in depicting the character's emotional, psychological, and moral transformation, offering insights into their internal struggles and development.

So an in depth analysis of the films/series reveals that nudity was used with an aesthetic, psychological purpose. The next chapter does a comparative study of the three works.

## Chapter 4

### A Comparative Analysis of *Love*, *Somebody*, and *A Killer Paradox* Through Theoretical Frameworks

"Art can never exist without naked beauty displayed."- William Blake (Blake)

Art and nudity have always been connected. Since ancient times, artists have used nudity to express creativity. This began with Ancient Greek art, took a backseat during the Middle Ages, and then became central again during the Renaissance. Nude figures appear in many types of art, such as history paintings, allegorical and religious art, portraits, and decorative arts. From prehistory to early civilizations, nude female figures often symbolized fertility and well-being. In art, nudity is more than just showing a naked body; it's a powerful artistic statement that involves deep emotions and expressions. To appreciate art and nudity, one must look beyond the surface to understand the creative and artistic intent behind it.

Recognizing nude art expands one's knowledge and perspective. Art is everywhere in nature, and the human body is one of the most beautiful and creative parts of it. Seeing the body as art requires an open mind and a deeper understanding of its aesthetic value. Art and nudity are deeply connected, each enhancing the appreciation of the other. The human body's intricate design showcases nature's artistic talent. Viewing the body through an artistic lens helps one see the profound aspects of nudity in art. Understanding nude art means embracing a broader perspective of human creativity and expression. The beauty of the human form, captured in various art forms, challenges viewers to see beyond the superficial and engage with the deeper meanings. There is art in everything, and within art, there is nudity; conversely, within nudity, there is art. Nudity in art isn't just about the naked body. It's about the emotions, stories, and messages the artist conveys



To understand the aesthetics of nudity, one must distinguish between "art in nudity" and "nudity in art." This understanding requires an appreciation of the artistic purpose, where the artist's intention plays a crucial role. The "aesthetic intention" of the artist directly influences the "aesthetic emotion" experienced by the viewer. Thus, examining the artistic purpose is essential to differentiate between these two concepts. The concept of "art in nudity" focuses on how art can beautifully exist within nudity. It explores how nudity can be a unique expression of artistic emotions and ideas, capturing its aesthetic potential and creative essence. The artist's intention here is to make a statement, not merely to display the body for attention or shock value. There is a clear purpose and a meaningful message behind the portrayal of nudity. On the other hand, "nudity in art" does not prioritize the aesthetic factor. It disrupts the artistic flow and beauty when the artist's intention is not to present art but to show something controversial purely for attention. While there may still be something artistic in "nudity in art," the quality is often overshadowed by artificial intentions. This approach neglects the aesthetic intentions that true art requires.

The history of nudity in film is often thought to have started recently, around twenty years ago, but it actually dates back to the 17th and 18th centuries. In the early days of Hollywood, moral outrage against the depiction of nudity, sexuality, crime and violence in films spurred the creation of censorship boards. The concept of Auteur theory advocates the notion that film is an art form and a means of personal expression for the filmmaker. Proponents of sex scenes in movies argue that sex is a form of storytelling that reveals aspects of the characters. It can be a joke or a source of fear, anxiety, and frustration, communicating many emotions beyond sheer carnal desire. Films have become the most used artistic medium that employs nudity in various dimensions of ideas. A film is the byproduct of many artists, and the aesthetics of nudity can be further understood by examining three shows: *Love*, *Somebody*, and *A Killer Paradox*. Each of these shows presents nudity in unique ways, with different artistic intentions. This clear difference

in concepts demonstrates that nudity can serve various purposes and is not just about the naked body or sex.

The opening scene of the 2015 film *Love* thrusts viewers into an intimate encounter between the main characters, Murphy and Electra. Their passionate sex scene is both abrupt and provocative, leaving audiences questioning whether they're watching art or something more explicit. The film's opening has faced significant criticism, with this particular scene being widely regarded as "exceptionally provocative." However, when viewed through an artistic lens, this scene carries deep significance and effectively captures the film's essence. Beyond the initial shock lies a deeper artistic purpose. This scene blurs the boundaries of dream, memory, and reality. Is it a recollection of Murphy's past with Electra, or a figment of his imagination? Psychologically, it reveals layers of character emotion. The director employs surrealism, fragmenting the memory or dream, creating a visually striking tableau. However, the real beauty is found in the transition. As Murphy wakes up next to his wife, Omi, the contrast is stark. His reality feels loveless and mundane, a far cry from the passionate past he shared with Electra. This opening scene encapsulates the film's essence—a poignant exploration of love, longing, and human connection. This opening scene serves as an important element in the movie's storyline, combining all its essence in a nutshell. Presenting this scene is crucial for the director to convey their true artistic vision as a statement to the audience.

It is important to analyze a complete movie and not prejudge it as mere pornography simply because it begins abruptly with a long sexual scene. Doing so would be an injustice to the art and the artistic creativity involved. There are deeper layers and hidden essences within the movie that deserve exploration. The aesthetics of the movie lie in the director's vision and presentation. According to auteur theory, a movie is like the director's signature. To truly understand a movie, one must understand the director, their vision, and their creative tastes.

François Truffaut's 1954 essay, "*A Certain Tendency in French Cinema*," claimed that film is a great medium for expressing the personal ideas of the director, suggesting that the director should be regarded as an auteur. Truffaut provocatively stated, "There are no good and bad movies, only good and bad directors." Auteur theory suggests that a director can use the commercial apparatus of filmmaking in the same way that a writer uses a pen or a painter uses paint and a paintbrush. It is a medium for the personal artistic expression of the director. The film theorist André Bazin explained that auteur theory was a way of choosing the personal factor in artistic creation as a standard of reference, and then assuming that it continues and even progresses from one film to the next (Anderson 1).

Gaspar Noé is a mainstream popular erotic director who celebrates art through eroticism. His essence of erotic taste is seen in all his movies as his signature style. This is especially evident in *Love* (2015). Noé identifies himself in many parts of the movie through multiple egos or personalities. Murphy, the main character, is a passionate student of filmmaking who wants to make a movie about love and sex, resembling Noé himself. Another character, Noé, is Murphy's girlfriend's ex-boyfriend, an artist who owns an international art gallery and specializes in nudity, possibly representing an alter ego of the director. The movie also features a child named Gaspar, the director's name, indicating a family bond he craves. By bringing these characters and equating them with his own personality, Noé shows that the movie and the director identify with each other. This connection highlights the director's tastes as a lover, his passion, his creative ideas, his artistic ability, and his desire for family and support.

*Love* (2015) by Gaspar Noé is an art film that delves into the complexities of relationships and emotional connections, using explicit scenes to explore themes of love and intimacy. Noé employs a unique aesthetic approach, utilizing color, light, and innovative camera techniques to

transform what could be seen as graphic content into a meaningful exploration of human connections.

The film's narrative structure is fragmented, with memories and flashbacks providing a non-linear storytelling method that immerses viewers in the protagonist Murphy's emotional state. This approach highlights the distinction between Noé's artistic intentions and mere pornography. For instance, the use of color and lighting, such as the reddish-brown filters and the symmetrical framing, serves to evoke specific emotions and reflect the internal states of the characters, rather than simply titillating the audience.

Moreover, Noé's depiction of sex scenes is not intended to be purely voyeuristic. Instead, these scenes are crafted to reveal deeper emotional truths about the characters and their relationships. The film challenges viewers to see beyond the explicit content and consider the broader narrative and artistic choices that convey themes of love, loss, and longing.

In essence, *Love* uses its explicit content as a tool to explore profound themes, distinguishing it from pornography by its artistic execution and narrative depth. Noé's goal is to create a visceral, immersive experience that encourages viewers to contemplate the essence of love and desire.

To appreciate the aesthetics of nudity in film, one must immerse oneself completely and try to understand the director's objective. *Love* is a combination of many nude and intimate scenes, which he makes meaningful by using flashbacks and scene transitions through memory jumps, creating the feeling that viewers are experiencing the movie through Murphy's memories. Each intimate scene holds special significance in Noe's vision.

For instance, the second nude scene, a memory of Murphy, in the film reflects upon Murphy's fate and mistakes. The aesthetics of this scene are captured in a minimalistic, white setting that emphasizes the genitals. Noe attempts to capture lustful emotions by adding playful

instrumental sounds in the background. The scene ends with a focus on Murphy's genitals with broken condoms, and Omi lying close to him. This imagery can be interpreted as foreshadowing future events and the changes in the relationships between Murphy, Omi, and Electra. This frame doesn't provoke disgust, embarrassment, or shame but instead presents itself as an aesthetic and artistic picture with deep meaning, making viewers wonder about its significance in the story's progression.

The third nude frame in the movie takes viewers to a more passionate and romantic intimate memory between Murphy and Electra. This scene is set against a dark and red background, accompanied by romantic and angelic instrumental sounds. The visual beauty of this scene lies in the characters' poses and the colors used by the director to enhance the mood. This scene is more romantic than the second frame, emphasizing the emotional involvement between the characters. For instance, Electra asks Murphy, "Can you show me how tender you can be?" (Love), leading to a passionate lovemaking session. This scene goes beyond physical intimacy, transitioning to a frame where it seems they have ended their sexual activity and are having a deep conversation. The beauty of the scene is highlighted in the composition: Electra lies naked horizontally, occupying the entire frame, while Murphy lies vertically, smoking. The red tones in the frame make it more visually pleasing and enhance the romantic and intimate atmosphere. This scene captures their closeness, romance, vulnerability, desire, and fantasy. Particularly when they openly communicate about their fantasy of having a threesome with a pretty blonde girl, it shows their sexual openness and liberation with each other. They don't judge one another; instead, they focus on pleasing each other, indicating that their love extends beyond physical attraction. They find freedom and believe they can experience anything as long as they are together.



Fig.3.1 Intimacy between Murphy, Electra and Omi: Love vs Lust

The fourth nude scene frames the fulfillment of their fantasy. After Murphy and Electra meet Omi as their neighbor, they invite her to hang out with them, leading to a new form of relationship. This scene is set in soft lighting, with a play of colors-grey, yellow, and peach-accompanied by an aggressive yet sensual guitar sound. The upside angle of the camera adds a unique feature, enhancing the aesthetics of the scene. This scene showcases the director's brilliance, as the intentions, feelings, and emotions of each character are clearly defined through their actions in this intimate moment. The positioning of each character in the scene, with Electra coming between Om and Murphy, creates a clear division between love and lust. Electra's interactions and intimacy with Omi fulfill a fantasy desire, whereas her interactions with Murphy show chemistry and passion. Murphy is more focused on Electra than on Omi. In this scene, Omi is presented more as an object used to fulfill desire (Fig. 3.1).

By the halfway point in *Love*, the narrative employs a sequence of flashbacks and memories that jump between the present and the past. This technique reflects the fragmented nature of Murphy's recollections. The flashbacks start with Murphy and Omi sleeping together behind Electra's back while she is away, which refers to the second frame of the movie where the condom breaks. It then shifts to the third frame, where Electra and Murphy express their desire to

start a family and have a baby named Gaspar. This scene is juxtaposed with another where Omi is fully pregnant, and Murphy names the baby Gaspar.

The film then transitions to the initial memories of Murphy and Electra's relationship, highlighting the security and happiness they shared at the beginning. This intimate scene is filled with yellow shades, representing the joy and newness of their relationship as they get to know each other. When Electra asks Murphy about his past relationships, the scene shifts to an orange background, depicting Murphy's intimacy with another woman, Lucille, his ex. The orange color symbolizes his first love, as he tells Lucille that she is his true love and that he wants to spend his life with her. The scene then switches back to Murphy and Electra, continuing to share secrets while becoming sexually intimate.

Another significant scene occurs in an art gallery where Electra works, which belongs to her ex, Noé, whose artworks are sensual. This environment might have inspired Murphy to take nude photographs of Electra as his muse. The narrative then moves to a club where a drunk Murphy discusses his passion for making sentimental sexual movies with Electra and a woman named Paula. Murphy's conversation about combining love and sex highlights his artistic vision: "What's the best thing in life?" Paula answers, "Love," to which Murphy responds, "You combine the two, and sex while in love. That's the best thing. I wanna see that." The scene intensifies as Murphy and Paula go to the washroom to smoke, and end up having sex while Electra knocks on the door. The green lighting in the washroom symbolizes dishonesty and lost trust, leading to a confrontation where Electra confesses, that she cheated on Murphy with her ex, Noé. This results in anger and arguments, followed by aggressive sex that serves as an outlet for their frustration. The dark lighting and disturbing sounds in this scene emphasize their emotional turmoil.

The narrative continues with a sequence where Murphy and Electra visit a sex club, influenced by a police officer's advice to enhance their relationship. The club's setting, with red

and black tones, flashing purple lights, and a chaotic yet beautiful atmosphere, reflects the complexity of their relationship. Murphy is triggered by Electra's enjoyment of the club and argues with her. Electra mocks him for his jealousy and challenges him to sleep with a trans woman, which traumatizes Murphy. This realization leads them to understand that their relationship has become toxic and need to understand each other and protect each other.

The film then jumps to the moment when Murphy and Electra first met and fell in love, highlighting their initial intimacy in an orange room with them wearing white undergarments, symbolizing the newness and fragility of their relationship. The movie concludes with Murphy realizing he has lost Electra forever, leaving him only with memories of their love. The final scene shows Murphy crying in the bathtub, longing for Electra's embrace. The film ends with a red-tinted memory of Murphy and Electra hugging each other naked in the bathroom, symbolizing a longing and a memory rather than a realistic event as seen in Fig. 3.2.



Fig.3.2 The final scene from Love



Through these scenes, Noé explores the depth of Murphy and Electra's relationship, using color and setting to convey their emotional states. The narrative structure and visual storytelling reflect the director's unique style, as suggested by auteur theory. According to this theory, a director's personal vision and recurring themes are evident throughout their body of work. Noé's signature style, characterized by his exploration of eroticism and deep emotional connections, is clearly present in *Love*. The experimental use of music, color, and camera angles, and the use of symmetry significantly contribute to the aesthetic appeal of Gaspar Noé's *Love*.

Noé's use of 3D technology is a significant artistic element. He employed 3D to add depth and intimacy to the film, making the viewer feel more immersed in the character's emotional and physical experiences. The non-linear storytelling, where scenes jump back and forth in time, mirrors the fragmented nature of memory and emotions. Additionally, Noé's dedication to authenticity in the performances plays a crucial role. The actors were encouraged to improvise and bring genuine emotion to their roles, which added a layer of realism to the intimate scenes. This commitment to authenticity helps the film transcend mere explicit content, aiming to capture the raw, unfiltered essence of human relationships. Lastly, the film's thematic exploration of love, desire, and the consequences of actions imbues it with a philosophical depth. Noé delves into the darker aspects of love and human nature, inviting viewers to reflect on their own experiences and the complexities of romantic relationships. These elements together create a film that, while provocative, aspires to be a profound artistic expression rather than simple pornography.

*Somebody*, the South Korean series, presents a unique blend of thriller and psychological elements, taking a different approach to depicting nudity. Unlike the film *Love*, *Somebody* doesn't offer a visually indulgent experience. Director Jung Ji-woo opts for a more subdued and realistic representation of the series. Known for his works like *Happy End* (1999), *Sarangni* (2005), and *Muse* (2012), Jung Ji-woo's style consistently showcases a realistic approach, starkly portraying

his characters' desires and impulses. His direction in *Somebody* maintains this signature style, focusing on a grounded and honest depiction of the narrative.

In the world of director Jung Ji-woo's first Netflix series *Somebody* (2022), even a serial killer longs to find love, feel connected, and be understood by somebody.

*Somebody* revolves around Seong Yun-o, a successful architect concealing a sinister secret—he is a serial killer who preys on women he encounters through a dating app called Somebody. His meticulously planned crimes take a twist when he encounters Kim Sum, who is suffering from Aspergers Syndrome and also the developer of the dating app Somebody. Yun-o is drawn by her unique personality.

The concept of nudity in *Somebody* diverges significantly from the themes explored in *Love*, focusing on unity, love, and intimacy between partners. *Somebody* explores the dark realm of a serial killer while examining the profound emotional voids experienced by its characters. Despite its darker narrative, the drama presents a unique approach to nudity. The first nude scene occurs in episode 1, where the main character, Yun-o, the serial killer, is shown naked in a bathtub, his entire back exposed to the screen, as he chokes and kills someone. This presentation of nudity serves to underscore the intensity and psychological depth of the storyline, setting the tone for the suspenseful and gripping narrative that unfolds. The presentation of nudity was stark and lacked aesthetic appeal, emphasizing the disturbing nature of the scene rather than any visual beauty. The significance of this scene lies in its portrayal of the serial killer as a deeply psychotic individual. His use of dating apps to lure and potentially kill victims hints at his depraved psyche and possible sexual deviance.

Moving to episode 3, another nude scene unfolds as the Yun-o connects with someone through the same dating app. This time, he meets Yeong Gi-Eun, a police officer who is also a friend of Kim Sum. Despite being wheelchair-bound due to a lower-body injury, she continues her

work as an officer. The Yun-o adopts a persona of someone also disabled from an accident, and they bond over their shared experience. They decide to go on a date, where the second nude scene occurs. Here, the killer reveals his true identity and attempts to engage in sexual activity, but fails to become aroused. The scene exposes the serial killer's vulnerabilities and inner conflicts, with his back fully exposed in a moment that underscores his complex character and hidden motives.

(Fig. 3.3)

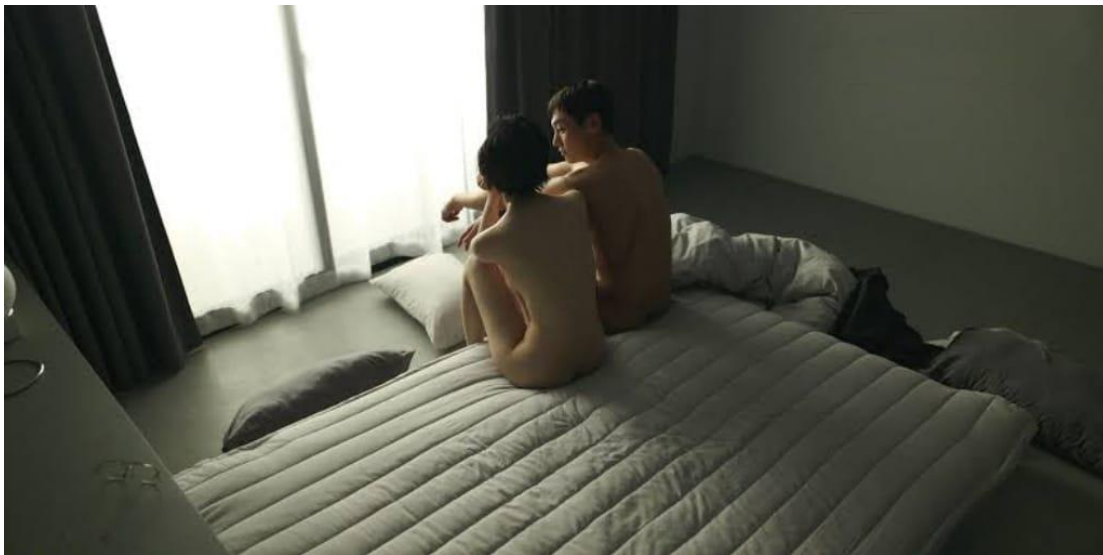


Fig.3.3 Yun-o and Kim Sum: Vulnerability and Truth

The third nude scene in *'Somebody'* unfolds in episode 5, where Kim Sum and the Yun-o, now romantically involved, engage intimately. After falling in love, Kim Sum discovers the truth about her boyfriend through a revealing chatbot conversation. The chatbot, serving as a pivotal tool, exposes Yun-o's disturbing desires to undress Kim Sum, engage in sex with her, and express a morbid fascination with killing people. Despite knowing the shocking truth, Kim Sum feels a deep emotional and romantic connection to the Yun-o. Previously lonely and craving love, she finds solace and understanding in their relationship, believing he truly comprehends her. Confronting him about his dark secrets, Kim Sum initiates a sexually charged encounter, where

they engage intimately. This scene captures their intense connection and mutual understanding, marking a pivotal moment of revelation and acceptance in the storyline.

The nudity and sexual content in this scene are integral to portraying the complex dynamics between Kim Sum and the Yun-o. It highlights Kim Sum's willingness to stand by him despite his flaws, seeing their similarities and feeling a profound bond. Likewise, the Yun-o is drawn to Kim Sum's acceptance and sees in her a partner who shares his perspective on life. Their relationship deepens as they embrace their shared understanding and belief in their special connection.

The final nude scene in *'Somebody'* occurs in the seventh episode, serving as a revelatory moment about the Yun-o's past and the development of his disturbing traits. Set in his earlier days as a successful architect, the scene unveils how he first encountered the dating app 'Somebody' amid its widespread advertising across the city. Intrigued, he downloads the app and swiftly matches with a woman who invites him to a hotel room for a spontaneous encounter. In the hotel room, the woman, dressed only in a shirt, proposes a threesome and expresses a desire for rough and intense sexual activity involving another man. Yun-o agrees, and as they engage in sexual activity, the scene portrays their explicit interactions. The woman tells him to be choked vigorously. Tragically, in the heat of the moment, he accidentally kills her, feeling a surge of power and excitement during the rough play. This harrowing experience becomes a pivotal moment in the serial killer's psyche, triggering an unsettling connection between sexual arousal and violence. The scene explores how this incident may have fueled his descent into serial killing, as he later takes the life of another man who joins them. It underscores the role of sex in his dark psychology, where the thrill of domination and control over his victims intertwines with his sexual desires. By revealing this traumatic past through nudity and explicit sexual content, 'Somebody'

offers a chilling insight into the origins of the Yun-o's behavior and the complex interplay between sexuality and violence in his psyche.

When comparing *'Love'* and *'Somebody,'* it becomes evident that they approach the theme of love and nudity in distinctly different ways. In *Love*, the focus is primarily on emotions, relationships, and the aesthetic pleasure derived from visual elements such as music, color, and composition. Director Gaspar Noé uses this visual aesthetics to evoke feelings and deepen the audience's insight into the character complexities, bonds they form and the changes that occur in their relationships. Nudity in *'Love'* serves as a tool to express love and intimacy between characters, enhancing the visual and artistic aspects of the film. On the other hand, *'Somebody'* takes a more psychological approach, where nudity plays a crucial role in exploring the characters' psychology, loneliness, and unique emotional states. For the Yun-o and Kim Sum, the main characters, nudity becomes a means to delve into their personalities and motivations. It reveals the depths of their relationships and the impact of their actions, providing essential insights into their psychological makeup. One distinct difference lies in how *'Somebody'* focuses on character aesthetics rather than visual aesthetics. While *'Love'* emphasizes the visual pleasure through its artistic presentation, *'Somebody'* uses nudity as a narrative device to explore the inner lives and complexities of its characters. This approach highlights the psychological depth and character development achieved through explicit nudity, which serves as a direct representation of their entire personalities.

While some critics may argue that the nudity in *'Somebody'* could have been avoided, others recognize its significance in enhancing the storyline. The explicit portrayal of nudity is essential for understanding the characters' complexities, their psychology, and the reasons behind their actions.

*A Killer Paradox* (2024) is another Korean Netflix series which faced criticism for presenting nude scene. *A Killer Paradox* directed by Lee Chang-hee's is a dark humorous series that follows Lee Tang, a university student and works part-time at a convenience store. He is facing existential crisis, not knowing what do about his life and future. He is depressed and feel like a loser in life. Tang grapples with feelings of resentment and disillusionment, particularly after cheating on his girlfriend. Lee Tang accidentally kills a man during an argument, only to later discover that the victim was a serial killer and rapist, perpetrating heinous crimes without repercussions. This revelation seemingly provides Tang with a twisted sense of relief and justification, influencing his subsequent actions. This relief was followed by a nude sex scene towards the end of the 1st episode of the series, could be interpreted as a manifestation of Tang's conflicted psyche. As he engages in intimate acts, his inner dialogue,

"Are you consoling yourself, knowing that it was a bad man that you killed? How cunning the human heart is, right?" (*A Killer Paradox*)

represented by the voice of the man he killed, questions his motives and satisfaction. This scene not only explores Tang's sexual desires but also delves into his guilt, desires, and suppressed identity.

In addition, the cinematography in "*A Killer Paradox*" stands out for its striking visuals and thematic use of colors and lighting. Lee Chang-hee actively uses surrealism to skillfully portrays lethal and hallucinatory scenes where the killer haunts Tang in his dreams, creating an eerie atmosphere. The slow-motion shots during action sequences add intensity and depth to the narrative, enhancing the viewer's experience. The use of colors like blood-red and blue-green effectively distinguishes between hero and villain characters, and his double personality. The nude scene is captured in a bluish light, emphasizing the surreal and dreamlike quality of the moment. This lighting choice not only highlights the girl but also underscores the blend of guilt and

pleasure that Tang experiences. It adds to the scene's complexity, portraying his inner turmoil and subconscious desires in a visually compelling manner.



Fig.3.4 Lee

Tang and his dream: Guilt and Pleasure.

Thus, the director uses nudity to show the moral aesthetics of the character Tang. The director has also attempted to explain the reason behind the depiction of some sexual scenes concerning Lee Tang. The director stated that it was relevant to show the morality of Lee Tang's character. Thus, the viewers are compelled to look beyond the representation of nudity as obscene and focus more on the meaningful and artistic purpose of the scene. Lee Chang-hee is also well known for his work, "*Strangers From Hell*" (2019), which also deals with dark concepts of crime and thriller.

## Conclusion

The human body is a marvel of natural artistry, each individual exhibiting a unique form of beauty that, despite its universal similarities, remains largely underappreciated. Film serves as a powerful medium to celebrate and capture this beauty from every angle, romanticizing the body and presenting it in an aesthetically pleasing manner. Nudity in movies, when thoughtfully incorporated, brings forth the most profound artistic expression of the human form, transforming it into an ultimate representation of art. The role of the director is crucial in this portrayal; their vision shapes how nudity is used to convey deeper emotional, moral, and psychological dimensions.

The exploration of nudity in the artistic realm, particularly within films, reveals a complex and multifaceted subject that extends far beyond mere explicitness. This project aims to justify the presentation of nudity as an essential artistic element that enriches the narrative, character development, and overall aesthetic experience of a film. This perspective necessitates an understanding that nudity in cinema is not inherently obscene but can serve profound artistic purposes.

Art and morality have always been at odds, as art cannot be judged solely from a moral perspective. Morality is subjective and varies from person to person, making it inappropriate to assess art through this lens. Consequently, censorship based on moral concepts should be avoided. Instead, nudity in films should be viewed for its artistic value. It represents not just a physical presence but a profound artistic expression that can offer new perspectives when appreciated through an artistic framework. Embracing this perspective allows us to challenge conventional boundaries and appreciate the role of nudity in enhancing narrative and character development, reflecting the artistic essence rather than moral judgment. Nudity should be evaluated not just for its visual impact but also for its emotional, psychological, moral, and character aesthetics. These



dimensions often provide deeper insights into the narrative and the characters, enriching the viewer's understanding and emotional engagement with the film.

Using auteur theory, we can appreciate the significant role directors play in shaping the way nudity is presented in their works. The director's vision and intention are paramount in determining the artistic value of such scenes. Nudity should be evaluated not just for its visual impact but also for its emotional, psychological, moral, and character aesthetics. These dimensions often provide deeper insights into the narrative and the characters, enriching the viewer's understanding and emotional engagement with the film.

Examining films like *Love, Somebody*, and *A Killer Paradox* demonstrates how directors use nudity in distinct ways. Gaspar Noé's "Love" exemplifies how nudity can explore emotional and visual aesthetics. Noé's use of non-linear storytelling, surrealism, and symbolism transforms intimate scenes into poignant expressions of emotion and relationship. His meticulous cinematography and symmetrical framing create a visually stunning experience that transcends traditional boundaries of nudity.

In the Korean drama *Somebody*, directed by Jung Ji-woo, nudity is integral to the psychological and character aesthetics of the story. The series uses physical interactions to reflect the psychological states and emotional connections of the characters, highlighting their vulnerabilities and obsessions. This approach advances the plot and provides a deeper understanding of the characters' motivations and internal conflicts.

Lee Chang-hee's *A Killer Paradox* presents a significant nude scene that has sparked debate. Set against dark humor and psychological tension, the series examines moral and character aesthetics through its protagonist, Lee Tang. The controversial scene represents Lee Tang's internal struggle and moral ambiguity, with surrealism and dream-like sequences emphasizing the character's psychological conflict and repressed desires.

Through these examples, my project underscores that nudity in film should not be dismissed as mere vulgarity but recognized for its potential to convey profound artistic meaning. The incorporation of nudity can elevate storytelling, providing insight into characters' inner worlds, enhancing emotional resonance, and challenging societal norms. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that not all uses of nudity achieve this artistic purpose. Some works may include explicit content for shock value or entertainment, detracting from artistic integrity. The balance between "art in nudity" and "nudity in art" must be carefully considered to ensure that such scenes serve a meaningful artistic purpose.

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