

# Gender roles and household pressures in 'rear window'



Alfred Hitchcock uses his classic mystery *Rear Window* to convey his opinion and view on the societal expectations of the roles of women and men. He illustrates the negativity of if women are in position, which it uncomforts men and pressures them to escape. Additionally, the film expresses a stereotype that men believe women are interested in money, status or success, while women are only interested in true love. As a result, males in the film are unwilling to proceed further in their relationships, until the desired women force them to form a commitment.

Hitchcock's protagonist L. B Jefferies to highlight his perspective on the stereotypical 1950s marriage. Right at the beginning of the film, Jefferies claims that his "drastic" move is to "get married", and his argument about the problematic Lisa Fremont, while Stella suggests that she is "loaded to her fingertips with love for [Jefferies]". These speak directly to the issue about men and women relationships at the time, which men are the ones in positions and they do not accept the opinions of women. However, as Jefferies' girlfriend Lisa Fremont breaks this conventional expectation, their relationship is soon is tension. The businesswomen Lisa, attempts to spoil Jefferies with a luxurious lifestyle with her own "hard earn" money, this positions Jefferies to feel uncomfortable as he is losing power in the relationship. Jefferies suggests that Lisa is "not meant" for his photojournalist type of job, and yet, when Lisa attempts to break the relationship, Jefferies still want to retain her. Indicating that Jefferies does not want Lisa to accompany him on his when he travels, yet he desires a woman at home to serve him upon his returns.

On the other hand, the antagonist Lars Thorwald is the opposite to Jefferies as he has to serve his wife, yet similar to the female appears to have had more power. Lisa demonstrates her power, as she refuses to accept Jefferies' suggestions and criticisms about her. Likewise, Lars does all the work for the family and never received a single praise from Anna. Additionally, while Lisa is preparing their dinner, in the opposite Lars apartment, this scene is mirrored, but the man is serving his nicely prepared meal for Anna Thorwald. Similarly to Jefferies not appreciating Lisa's work, Anna simply ignores Lars' kiss and throw away his flowers; instead she is more interested in the content of the dishes. Revealing the unhappy marriage between the Thorwalds, which is due to Anna's pressure on Lars, which he is working almost like a slave for Anna. This inequality and the societal values of genders destabilizes their relationship, resulting in Lars betraying Anna and seeking for another long-distanced lady-friend even at his white hair old age. Therefore, through the two extremes of Jefferies and Lars Thorwald, Hitchcock illustrates that if the duty of husband and wife is unfairly distributed, unpleasantness will build up and it could even lead to murder.

The film indicates that men believe that women desire materialistic satisfaction, while in reality women only want true love. In Jefferies' eye, Miss Torso is a "queen bee" who can choose whatever men to satisfy her strong sexual appetite, and to extract benefits from those male "drone". However, as an experienced woman, Lisa, she indicates that Miss Torso is "doing women's hardest job, juggling wolves". This immediately changes the moral issue from Miss Torso to her suitors, which from Lisa's perspective Miss Torso is a respectable woman who needs work hard and protects herself in the

1950s male dominating world. The film eventually uncovers that Miss Torso is indeed a married woman, and her excitement of seeing Stanley suggests that her love is always on him, despite he seems more attracted by the “icebox”. Additionally, as Jefferies suggests that she “ belongs to the rarefied atmosphere”, he is threatened which that could not provide any physical items that he thinks can please her. In addition, Lisa can simply wear and sell a dozen of “ stock exchange” worth of cloth to his messy apartment for a night, further disconcerts Jefferies, which leads to him ruining the night and their late-night fight. However, Lisa’s money wasting actions actually suggests that she is truly in love with Jefferies, and totally accepts him and willing to change to adapt to what Jefferies wants as she claims that she “ just like to be part of it. As the film progresses, she changes and becoming what Jefferies desires, as she first brings the compact suitcase, and later courageously breaking into Thorwald’s apartment. Therefore, the film demonstrates that the male’s perspective on women is usually incorrect as women only desire their unconditional love, not the pleased love.

Rear Window indicates that it is not necessarily that women are required to serve men in the family. However, if the roles are inverted in a highly traditional setting, an unexpected breakdown is likely to happen. Some such as Jefferies can make it through and come to a good end; some such as Lars Thorwald ended up arrested for murder. Ironically, while most women in the film desire a marriage, men try to repel and avoid the responsibilities and promises to be made.