

'A New Cinephilia': Girish Shambu and the Need for Fresh Discourse

In *Manifesto for a New Cinema*, Girish Shambu reflects on an 'old cinephilia' that has been given precedence for so long, and questions its scope and extent with regards to its biases relating to gender, race, and ideologies. In response, his manifesto aims to propagate a 'new cinephilia': one that recognizes that 'movie lore' has been "authored mostly by...straight white men" (Shambu, par.1). He proposes a push for a conscious effort to *inclusive* cinema; a fresh perspective within the ranks of cinephilia through diversity and a multiplicity of voices. Shambu lays out his arguments for this new form of discourse and simultaneously provides a criticism for that of the orthodoxy.

In *Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962*, Andrew Sarris holds his position in favor of the director of a film being the standard for its identification and that it is the director's artistic/stylistic value that grants a film its 'greatness'. His three premises of the auteur theory all exclusively feature the director as the true artistic leader to a film in terms of technical competence, visual style, and "interior meaning" (Sarris 452-452). Shambu highlights the primacy that old cinephilia gave to aesthetic pleasure as a key value entity, and argues that auteurism is a "man-spreading machine" (Shambu, par.4). Therefore, in response, he claims that these very pillars of 'old' auteurism, the three premises, are flawed in principle since they support the notion that "the worst film by an auteur is inherently more interesting than the best film by a non-auteur". This is restrictive, he says, in terms of the various voices in filmmaking (Shambu, par.4). The limited reach this form of discourse had in old cinephilia has made prevalent its inherent hetero-whiteness. As part of new cinephilia, he introduces a long-overdue novel utility of auteurism that upholds its true aura, that allows for a wider appreciation of perspectives with regards gender and race.

More critically, Shambu acknowledges old cinephilia and its obsession with nostalgia and its conservative attitude that unconditionally defends the artists regardless of any moral or ethical lapses, in the name of *art*. He claims these “value judgments about artists and their work” are antiquated (Shambu, par.6), and that the new cinephilia aims for a higher order form of consciousness with regards to such ideological value judgements. In *Le Camera Stylo*, Alexandre Astruc Akins cinema to literature and wishes to treat it less as visual artistry and more as writing. He expounds on the belief that films have the ability to reflect complex philosophies (Astruc 3). For Shambu, these notions reflect his worries about the prevalent “nostalgic fantasy...by privileging certain identities (white, male, heterosexual) over others” (Shambu, par.8). Astruc claims that the cinema can be used as a “vehicle of thought” by solidifying the connections between the various symbolic associations, such as dialogue, camera movements, objects, and characters. He founded these based on the exact criteria that Shambu wishes to illegitimate. He exemplifies this through the apparent ‘overrepresentation of male pathology’ in old cinephilia, wherein most ideological stances involved male-led, heterosexually charged, and Euro-Western dogmas that could not continue (Shambu, par.7). Astruc argues that the director, or auteur, has final say on the output of a film and that the writer of any film must be the one who *authors* its creative and stylistic signature. Shambu recognizes this fallacy by advocating for a new kind of “cine-love” that recognizes the universality of the human experience through diverse perspectives, which gives equal weight to all underrepresented groups within the artform. Representational justice, as So Mayer recalls, must aim for “*true* inclusiveness” that removes the marginalization involved in this orthodoxy of film theory that Astruc and Sarris were embedded in (par.5).

Works Cited

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