



Representation of Sound and Silence in the movie *A Quiet Place* through the Lens of Disabilities Studies

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Abstract: The present paper deals with the movie *A Quiet Place* entirely based on post-apocalypse era which then is situated in the time of Trump's presidency. The paper shows how sound and silence plays an influential role in the movie. The verbal tension which is built by the nuclear family last only nine minutes in the movie. The paper exhibits how silence is shown awkward in normative structure yet without any scream in the horror movie, the thrill and suspense pertain to exist. The struggle of the normative family in normative domain with their deaf daughter to survive with alien like monsters who are blind with extreme sensitive sense of hearing. The paper asserts that sound and silence are more rhetorical ways to communicate and are advance than the American Sign Language. The deafness imparted through a real-life person and even by the character of daughter is subdued by the ableist ideologies.

Keyword: Deafness, horror movie, silence, disability studies, ASL, Hollywood, American movie, rhetoric, media

Introduction

In the present paper the subject is movie *A Quiet Place*, where the survivors must stay silenced in order to stay alive. Abbott's family is surrounded by creatures who are blind and extremely sensitive to sound, where even slightest of sound can lead to dreadful death of the human around. It's a post-apocalyptic world, a place where there is no system, no technology, a world where only scattered elements remain. In the recent times modern American cities and towns have been inspired by imagined ruins of building since a long time, in their print, audio and visual media. 'These depictions transcend from traditional boundaries, with post-apocalyptic urban spaces appearing in popular and 'literary' works of fiction'.

Abbott family had to clear their surrounding from any object creating sound, in their farmhouse in New York City as shown in movie. The plot is hugely gripping, sensitising, which will give goosebumps, a horror movie with no sound, and still gives an adrenaline rush on the slightest of sound created by humans.

Lee Abbott played by John Krasinski who is a filmmaker too, his role as a father in the movie is quiet vital towards the three kids, Regan, Marcus and Beau. Lee uses his ingenuity and intelligence to save guard his family. The use of American Sign Language (ASL) is used in movie to communicate with Regan who is deaf daughter in family. Later she only discovers the way to kill the monsters, that the secret to kill the monsters lies in the Regan's Cochlear implant. The scenes with ASL are subtitled for audience but the verbal scenes are not captioned for deaf audience.

While speaking about the character, the portrayal in the horror flick moves back and forth with scenes with scary excitement but also shows the emotional bond among the family members. Evelyn is an affectionate mother, she is the strength who keeps their hopes alive though she herself deals with her pregnancy situation. Regan is deaf, dealing with her impairment she is a deaf character played by Millicent Simmonds, a real-life deaf person. Regan's silence in movie speaks through her subtle expressions, shows her feeling of guilt, anger and resentment that she would not be able to hear or have indication of the monsters approaching them.

Marcus is careful and afraid of the present situation; he is fully aware of the perils the family is being faced with. Beau is very young and naïve towards the dangers that come forth their way, and in specific scene he pays a very high for the smallest blunder, it is a dreadful and shell-shocked scene. Father is the only character trying best with all survival traits and is holding on to keep the family together and safe as much as possible.

Concept of Deaf Studies and Disability Studies in movie

In layman term, Deaf studies is the study of social life of deaf people according to Wikipedia. According to Clare Mullaney while explaining the key concepts of Disability Studies she defines former as a study that ‘emerged out of civil right movements in the late twentieth century’ she encourages scholars to give importance to disability studies and consider it as a form of ‘cultural difference’ in respect of other field of study. Barker’s says in his own essay that disability is there in every part of literature, its presence can be felt in every era of literature. While explaining in brief disability is an area of study that covers all impairments, mobility limitations and restricted participation that affects person’s participation in day-to-day activities. This paper through the movie *A Quiet Place*, makes a base to explore Deaf Community and Disability Studies. Someone who is deaf is admonished to be a member of a Deaf community, a culturally marginalised one, Deaf people are recognised by American Sign Language, ASL is not linguistic English but its ‘on the hand ‘where ideas are expressed in relation to normal spoken English words and to certain specific words like ‘sorry’ and ‘thank you’. ASL is the trademark of deaf community. ‘Brenda Jo Brueggemann notes that English and ASL are culturally different’ and this creates an obvious difference in the speech and writing of any other field and normative discourse. In the movie the person who plays the role of deaf is Millicent Simmonds, according to *Imdb* website is a BAFTA nominated actress from Pittsburgh, she started her career from performing and telling stories in ASL she never expected that she will play a role in Hollywood movies, as its uncommon to see a Deaf Identity perform a normal social role in a global form and explicit media. Mille (nickname of Millicent) is an important Deaf Identity in the accord. She played the role of Regan in the movie, we as an audience are always on the brink and nail-biting nervousness when we see her without her hearing implant. As a spectator to observe a deaf girl going in wild without her cochlear implant surrounded by monsters who have extreme hearing sensitivity makes the movie *A Quiet Place* a unique run on the mill horror. Regan is brave and intelligent just like father, she is full of hope and endeavours for survival. She wears a cochlear implant that medically symbolises her deafness in movie. Lee supports Regan as a father, by making sure that her cochlear implant is working he repairs it, so that she is always cautious about the dangers approaching. This shows a connection not only just between a father and daughter but also a tradition of supporting the hearing culture where self is supported by the other.

The Silence, A Gap between reality and representation in movie:

I would like to bring light upon the term called Sedatephobia, this mean a fear caused to a person due to fear of silence. It is a common phobia these days, it is caused by anxiety created due to past experiences. Now in the present movie, the family is unable to communicate in silence. They are trained to talk in American Sign Language but treat that as a thing only for utilitarian purpose, they feel ASL is not sufficient to communicate. *A Quiet Place* emulates silence with deafness, ‘this frames a deaf life is not worth living’ . Throughout the movie Abbott family reinstates that sound is something that Regan is not able to understand. In the very opening scene of movie Regan gives toy rocket to her younger brother Beau, that eventually leads to death of Beau. One more instance where she is stands in a cornfield and monsters are behind her, this also shows a disadvantage of being deaf in movie. But the scenario is different, any disabled person is more conscious of their surroundings. Similarly, Regan’s intelligence is explicit when she innovatively brings the idea to destroy the monsters. Regan unplugs herself from the cochlear implant, and she removes the external part of cochlear implant and places it near microphone, because of the shrieking sound and vibration the monsters are incapacitated and destroyed. When Regan completely removes the implant in this whole process, she detaches herself from medicalised support of sound and enters the world of silence. She here uses her own experience of sound, and in confidence of her consciousness she trusts the move she is about to make. So, Regan does not need to be saved from her deaf existence but the from the representation that deaf can only exist with support of a hearing aid. She turns out to be a saviour. Thomson quotes in her essay on ‘*Extra Ordinary Bodies*’ that ‘even though threatens to snap the slender thread of sociability, most physically disabled people are skilled enough in these encounters to repair the fabric of the relation so that it can continue’ . The other aspect of silence is the movie is when, the subtitles are not given for the disabled audience. ASL has been decoded through subtitles for the normal people but some scenes where there are words spoken this is no subtitle this shows lack of support for deaf people. This makes disabled people to be uncertain and unsociable. But still the movie takes a step ahead in encouraging the disabled people through the participation of an actress who is deaf in reality and it makes a way for better approach for disabled actors to be involved in future media productions.

CONCLUSION

By reviewing this movie through the angle of silence and sound, I think I achieved a certain level of criticism to work in the realm of disability studies. It is quite important to scintillate the need, desires and rights of disabled people. I will further pay attention in my future studies on abled or hearing actors in a media role, which I do not contend in person. But this paper focused on disabled person, who is a deaf female and played a role with cochlear implant, and explicit representation of a disabled or differently abled person. The silence is odd in movie, Regan is exceptionally shown as a character who does not scream, showcasing that a deaf character is not only able to hear but also cannot scream. This absence of any audible sound by deaf person presents their life to a muted one lacking any curiousness, excitement and passive. I hope to in coming media representations these pervasive and shallow view on the disabled people must turn to be better in upcoming works of media.

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