A Psychoanalysis of Miley Cyrus

Miley Cyrus’ music video “Wrecking Ball”, released in 2013, was a hugely talked about video and as of midday, 21\textsuperscript{st} November, viewed 812,747,528 times. It can be argued that the reason for this is simple, the video is greatly sexualised and features, unsurprisingly, a wrecking ball; a combination that spikes the interest of many. However, it can be argued, that when looking at it through a psychoanalyst’s perspective, Cyrus’ video is the perfect example of what Mulvey calls the “male gaze”. Mulvey’s “male gaze” theory is the idea that in all films the camera takes on the role of a heterosexual male, sexualising all women while ignoring the sexual aspects of the male cast. This occurs through scenes focusing heavily on women’s legs, breasts and curves, helped through the use of revealing clothing. Within Cyrus’ video there are multiple shots that focus on her legs and lips with the singer emphasising her curves through provocative poses. Moreover, her outfit is designed to ensure that the viewer is aware of Cyrus’ body, with the bare minimum of skin being covered. All of this, according to Mulvey, is part of ‘scopophilia’, the act of gaining pleasure from looking. This, combined with the idea that ‘gaze’ is an act of dominance, the viewer is not the subject and so is in control of the situation, further supports Mulvey’s theory.

Women within film are being repressed into a simply sexual role. However, the reading can go deeper than this. It is important to note that Mulvey based her theories on Freud’s own work. For Freud the video would suggest that Miley Cyrus’ id has more control than her ego, clear through both the sexual but also destructive tones of the video. The film shows Cyrus’ primal desires as free and uncontrollable, actions that can be linked to the idea of hysteria. This was a concept investigated by Freud, who believed that a disrupted development of the psyche could cause hysteria in both men and women. Cyrus further demonstrates this through her actions with the sledgehammer. By licking it and focusing on it with her mouth Freud would argue that Cyrus has transgressed back to
the oral stage of development. Her id has so much control that her psyche has not fully
developed and so she still finds pleasure through oral stimulation.

Many forms of media can be psychoanalysed and while this is an extreme case it is
important to note that the provocative nature of music videos, songs and films directly
relate and are easily explained through Freud’s, and others, theories.