

Escaping the Scripted World: A Lacanian Analysis of Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real in The Truman Show (1998) Film

Grania Sharenlie¹, Josh Fitzkioshi Wijaya²,

Michelle Whitney Ang³, Pei Yi Cai⁴

English Literary Criticism, Boanerges: Makarios Education Journal

Email: grania.sharenlie@sekolahmakarios.id, josh.fitzkioshi.wijaya@sekolahmakarios.id
michelle.whitney.ang@sekolahmakarios.id pei.yi.cai@sekolahmakarios.id

*"You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways."*
— Psalm 139:3 (NIV)

ABSTRACT

The Truman Show (1998) was analysed through the psychoanalytic lens of Lacan to investigate the subjective identity, the illusion of reality, and the authority of the "Big Other" in the film. The methodology was qualitative and involved the analysis of dialogue, character interactions, the mechanics of the cinematic gaze, and the visual interpretation of cinematography through scene-based textual analysis, narrative close reading, and visual analysis. The paper explores the concept of the split subject that is split between a constructed reality and an authentic desire based on Lacan's theories of the imaginary, symbolic, real, and the big other, and analyzes Truman Burbank as such. The findings are that: **(1)** Truman's life in Seahaven is a precarious product of the Imaginary order disrupted by interventions of the Real; **(2)** The creator, Christof, is the Big Other, who regulates the subject's universe through surveillance and by controlling his narrative; and **(3)** Escaping is a radical subjective act of liberation, a subversion of the symbolic gaze. In the end, the film reveals the deep-seated feelings of alienation, desire, and resistance in a hyper-realistic world. This study adds to the psychoanalytic work that has been undertaken in popular film and proposes that further research be carried out on surveillance films or the Lacanian gaze in today's digital media.

Keywords: *Identity, Mirror Stage, Reality, Symbolic, Surveillance*

INTRODUCTION

The practice of analyzing modern cinema and visual narratives allows us to dissect how storytelling shapes the architecture of human identity and our collective perception of truth. Much like the parables of classical literature, the power of film lies in its ability to function as a pedagogical tool, teaching audiences to navigate the complexities of autonomy, ethics, and the "deception" of reality. Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* (1998) serves as a contemporary allegory, a digital-age "Allegory of the Cave" that transcends entertainment to narrate the struggle for individual agency within a controlled environment. *Research from DataReportal (2024)* indicates that the average person now spends nearly 7 hours a day engaging with digital media, often within curated "performative" spaces that blur the line between private life and public spectacle. This film is not merely a critique of reality television; it functions as a vital narrative on the ethics of the "gaze" and the commodification of human experience. In an era where global society is

increasingly defined by surveillance and the curation of "authentic" identities for profit, analyzing *The Truman Show* becomes a necessary academic exercise in understanding how power structures manipulate the narratives we accept as objective reality.

The cultural impact of *The Truman Show* (1998) extends far beyond the cinema, manifesting in a documented psychological phenomenon known as The Truman Show Delusion. Invented by psychiatrist Joel Gold and neurophilosopher Ian Gold in 2008, this syndrome describes individuals who believe their lives are staged reality shows being broadcast to a global audience. This real-life interconnection provides evidence of the film's "prophetic" nature regarding the erosion of privacy. While Truman Burbank's world was a physical set, the 21st-century digital landscape has created a "virtual Seahaven" through social media and constant surveillance. According to a study in *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, the rise of the "always-on" digital culture has blurred the lines between private existence and public performance, leading to a "Digital Panopticon" where individuals feel constantly observed. This creates a critical background issue: the film is no longer a "What If?" science-fiction scenario, but a reflection of a society grappling with surveillance capitalism and the psychological trauma of losing an "unwatched" life. Consequently, analyzing the film today requires looking at how the commodification of the self has turned Truman's fictional nightmare into a modern sociological reality. There is an in-depth connection between film narrative and these real-life issues. Because both Seahaven and the digital environment at this time serve as the 'Big Other'. There is an omnipresent gaze that defines identity regulation and external authority. This relation can not be neglected as it reveals how the algorithms surveillant our daily life have created a sense of psychological alienation similar to Truman's. Thus, Truman's pursuit of a 'lost object' of despair has become a symbol of the society nowadays struggling to reclaim psychological autonomy.

The Truman Show was released on June 5, 1998, and published by Paramount Pictures. Directed by Peter Weir and written by Andrew Niccol, this film successfully serves as a work of dark comedy and psychological drama. Starring Jim Carrey in his career as Truman Burbank, alongside Laura Linney, Ed Harris, and Natasha McElhone, the film achieved great critical and commercial success with the audience. Since it was released in 1998, the production has been a massive global success, generating more than \$264,118,201 million in total box office revenue. It received much recognition, with 42 wins and 69 nominations, including three Academy Award nominations for Best Director, Best Supporting Actor and Best Original Screenplay. Moreover, this film earned three Golden Globe Awards, which are Best Actor (Jim Carrey), Best Supporting Actor (Ed Harris), and Best Original Score (Burkhard von Dallwitz and Philip Glass). Rated PG (Parental Guidance Suggested) for its thematic elements and deep language, this 1 hour 43 minutes film got positive responses from the internet with an 8.2/10 on IMDb and a 90% in a metacritic.

The narrative follows the main character, Truman, an insurance salesman who discovers that his entire life is a 24-hour-a-day television show. He lives on a massive island, called Seahaven, which is inhabited entirely by paid actors. His life since he is little is shared with the entire world without him knowing. However, the deep message of the film is focuses on the exploration of the human psyche and the self. Beyond its colorful, bright, and 1990s style, this film functions as a strong symbol of the loss of personal autonomy that is controlled by the external. It explores how a person's mind can be colonized by authority. The character of Christof as "The Creator" represents a manipulative figure who uses Truman's fear, such as his phobia of water, which is manipulated to make him stay in the created world and gain more profit. The film critiques a society that uses human suffering as entertainment. It shows that Truman's daily emotions turn into "products" for the audience, creating a fake scene and identity for his whole life. Ultimately, the story is about the painful but necessary journey of self-discovery. It depicts Truman's struggle to break free from a scripted identity to find the real world that is unpolished and seems dangerous, but finally, he owns it.

Jacques Lacan's tripartite structure of psychic registers, the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real, forms the theoretical foundation of this study. Rather than developmental stages the subject passes through and leaves behind, Lacan treats these registers as coexisting orders that structure subjectivity throughout life, each contributing a distinct dimension to how the subject relates to itself, to language, and to what resists symbolization altogether (Lacan, 2006).

The Imaginary order originates in Lacan's account of the mirror stage, in which an infant, encountering its own reflection, misrecognizes a coherent, unified image of itself where none yet exists at the level of its actual motor coordination. This misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) inaugurates the ego as a fundamentally alienated structure, built on an image rather than on lived bodily experience (Lacan, 2006; Homer, 2005). Homer (2005) argues that this makes the Imaginary the register of identification, image, and the specular relation to others, in which the subject's sense of wholeness depends on an external, and therefore false, point of reference.

The Symbolic order, by contrast, is the register of language, law, and social structure. Lacan's claim that the unconscious is structured like a language locates subjectivity within a signifying chain that precedes and exceeds the individual subject (Lacan, 1978). Entry into the Symbolic, associated with the resolution of the Oedipal situation and submission to what Lacan terms the Name-of-the-Father, positions the subject within a network of signifiers, kinship structures, and cultural law that it did not create and cannot fully master (Lacan, 2006). Evans (1996) notes that the Symbolic is therefore the order through which desire itself is organized, since desire, for Lacan, is always the desire of the Other, articulated through language rather than through unmediated need.

The Real is the most resistant of the three registers to definition, precisely because Lacan positions it as that which lies outside symbolization entirely. It is not "reality" in the everyday sense but rather what remains unassimilable to both image and language, encountered only in moments of rupture, trauma, or impossibility (Lacan, 1978). Fink, in his introduction to Lacan's later work, and Evans (1996) both characterize the Real as that which returns to the same place, resisting the subject's attempts to integrate it into a coherent narrative or image.

Taken together, these three registers offer a framework for analyzing subjectivity not as a stable, self-transparent identity but as a structure continually negotiated across image, language, and the limits of what can be represented. This framework informs the present study's approach to [insert textual/filmic object of analysis], treating [character/text] as a site where Imaginary identification, Symbolic positioning, and the pressure of the Real can be traced through narrative, dialogue, and visual or structural elements.

In *The Truman Show* (1998), it can be argued that the progression that occurs in the life of the protagonist mirrors that of a Lacanian disruption within the registers of the psyche, starting out in the Imaginary Register where the town of Seahaven itself acts as a prolonged Mirror Stage (McGowan, 2007) through which he is able to preserve his ego until the point at which the actual surveillance systems become apparent and externalize the Gaze thus bringing him to the awareness that his reality is fake. What triggers Truman's move into the Symbolic Register is the visual anomaly, a term used by Bruce Fink (1995) in relation to the *objet petit a*, which causes a break in the imaginary realm and forces Truman to come face-to-face with the paternal order represented by the character of the director, Christof. In realizing that there are contradictions in the order imposed on him by this authority, Truman becomes aware that the Big Other is "barred," a condition known as "desubstantiation" (Žižek, 2002). Jan Jagodzinski (2004) is highly critical of the suggestion that *The Truman Show* ends with a move into a false Symbolic Order, the late-capitalist "Desert of the Real".

There is a similar study conducted by Jagodzinski J. (2016). *The Truman Show: A symptom of our times? Or, a cure for an escape attempt!* He considered *The Truman Show* as a Lacanian 'symptom' of postmodern consumer society. He pointed out that the film's reality TV shows have actually exposed a corporate 'perversity', and this perversity traps the subject in a symbiotic order that is simulated. On the other hand, Laso's study *Comentario a The Truman Show* (2023) had focused on the 'Omnivoyeur' or the absolute gaze from the audience. He suggested that Truman got his liberation from separating the function from the screen, where he refused to remain as an object under others' vision. Although both scholars utilized Lacanian frameworks in their studies, their methodologies are different. Jagodzinski (2016) employed a social-political symptom reading to critique global capitalism, while Laso (2023) provides an ethical comment on the limitations of the 'Omnivoyeur'. These studies complement each other's

study where Jagodzinski revealed the ‘womb-like’ confinement of Christof, the corporate father, and Laso emphasizes how the subject is able to transcend that confinement by refusal to the gaze.

Except for these contributions, both of their studies have yet to examine the mechanism of Truman's psychic transition. Jagodzinski focused on the external corporate structure that represents the symbolic order; meanwhile, Laso focused on the external gaze from the audience. Neither of the two studies has discussed the 'objet petit a' where the lost object of desire embodied by Sylvia has become like a catalyst that broke down Truman's imaginary world. Besides this, though Laso has discussed external gaze, he has not discussed the specific language slips and the failure in the film's script, that actually revealed by the cracking of 'Name of the Father. So there is still a clear research gap about the object petit, it has become the primary disruptor of the symbolic and imaginary registers. The need to explore deeply about the lost object became crucial in that it eventually facilitated the fading collapse that came afterward.

Based on the above issue, this study dive into the role of Sylvia as the ‘objet petit a’ where she is representing the loss of desire, and also discuss the ‘Big Order’ Christof’s ‘object petit a’ introduced ‘lack’ to the perfect world, it became hard to maintain the imaginary world of Seahaven, which led Truman to leave the fantasy and face the real world.

Binary Opposition

Imaginary	Real
The imaginary represents the picture of the perfect world, the town of Seahaven, where Truman’s identity is built on a fake harmony with his surroundings. This state is alienating because the subject identifies with a fixed and created image rather than their true inner self. Lacan explains that the imaginary is deceptive: " <i>The ego is a master of error, the seat of illusions, and the source of misrecognition</i> " (Lacan, 1953/1988, p. 165).	The real is the opposite of the imaginary. It is the unpolished truth that exists beyond the reach of the camera. It is not the everyday reality as known, but the crack that disrupts the perfect life. The real cannot be controlled by Christof or with a script. Lacan emphasizes that this state cannot be captured by symbols or images: " <i>The real is that which resists symbolization absolutely</i> " (Lacan, 1954/1991, p. 66).

METHOD

This study used a qualitative method to analyze the psychological construction of identity and reality. This method was chosen because the study focused on examining the behaviors, internal conflicts, and psychological evolution of the protagonist in a controlled environment. This method examined how the psychological structures of self-perception, authority, and desire were portrayed through characters, narrative progression, and cinematic elements in the film. The theory to support this study is solely directed by the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, specifically through his theory of *the three orders: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real*.

This framework was chosen because it provides a direct interface to the psychological journey of Truman Burbank, who exists as a subject trapped within a literalized "Symbolic Order" controlled by an external "Big Other" (Christof). The film *The Truman Show* (1998) was chosen as the main text as it functions as a cinematic allegory for the "Mirror Stage" and the traumatic encounter with "The Real".

The study used close reading, thematic analysis, and visual analysis of relevant dialogue and scenes that affect Truman's artificial world, particularly formulating his internal dialogue between his performative life in Seahaven and his unconscious desire for the "Real" truth. The data was obtained through deep observation in three forms: visual, dialog, and cinematography. These elements were chosen because they provided evidence of how self-perception, linguistic authority, and the pursuit of an unattainable desire were constructed and represented throughout the film. The narrative was analyzed to understand the development of the plot and Truman's journey from a fabricated existence to psychological liberation.

The scope of this study focused on the analysis of the three psychic orders in *The Truman Show*, particularly the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. The Imaginary was examined through forms of self-perception, alienation, and the illusion of a cohesive ego. The Symbolic order was analyzed through how a paternal authority figure establishes the linguistic and physical boundaries of the subject's world. Meanwhile, the Real was examined through the traumatic events that occur when the subject's idealized reality collapses, forcing an encounter with the unmediated truth. The study was limited to aspects of Lacanian theory proposed by Jacques Lacan that were directly relevant to the film, specifically the triad of the three psychic orders, the Mirror Stage, and the concept of the *objet petit a*. It did not cover broader or separate psychoanalytic concepts, such as the Freudian psychosexual stages or late Lacanian concepts like the *sinthome*, as these were not significantly represented in the narrative.

DISCUSSION

1. The Mirror Stage, Visual Surveillance, and the Alienation of the Ego

The narrative of Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* serves as a structural critique of human ego construction by presenting Truman Burbank's daily routine as a macro-scale manifestation of Jacques Lacan's Mirror Stage. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the Mirror Stage occurs between six and eighteen months of age, when an infant who perceives their own body only as a fragmented, uncoordinated mass of drives identifies with a complete, unified reflection in a mirror. This reflection provides an illusion of bodily wholeness, giving birth to the ego, or the "I." However, Lacan posits that this initial identification is fundamentally an act of alienation (*méconnaissance*); the subject mistakes an external, static image for their internal reality (Lacan, 1977, p. 2). In the context of the film, Truman's entire environment, the hyper-sanitized, picturesque island of

Seahaven, functions as this deceptive mirror. The town is custom-designed by the director, Christof, to reflect a flawless, idealized version of the American corporate dream back to Truman, thereby trapping his psyche within the comforting confines of the Imaginary Order.

This structural reliance on the Imaginary is explicitly spatialized in an early, pivotal scene where Truman stands before his bathroom medicine cabinet mirror. Believing he is entirely alone,



Picture 1. Truman stares into the mirror

he uses a piece of soap to draw an astronaut's helmet around his reflection on the glass, launching into an elaborate, improvised monologue about exploring rocky mountain peaks and claiming territory for mankind. The cinematography in this sequence is critical: the camera does not frame Truman from a neutral, objective perspective within the room. Instead, the viewer looks at Truman

through the mirror itself, utilizing a tightly framed, circular vignette shot that mimics a hidden camera lens embedded behind the silvered glass. This visual choice directly points out Lacan's theory of identity construction. Truman's internal sense of self-worth and bodily coordination is actively being generated by performing for an image that he believes is a private reflection, yet this reflection is quite literally the mechanical aperture through which the external "Other" observes and monetizes him.

The deep alienation of Truman's identity becomes apparent when these micro-spaces of perceived privacy are slowly unmasked as public panopticons. When Truman accidentally uncovers the anomalies of his world, such as noticing that his car radio is broadcasting his exact movements, the Imaginary mirror cracks. The discovery that his most private spaces, including his bathroom mirror, harbor hidden cameras, forces an existential shift from a stable identity to a deeply fragmented state of clinical neurosis. Lacan separates neurosis from psychosis based on how the subject relates to the Symbolic Law; the neurotic acknowledges the existence of the Law and the desires of the Big Other but is constantly tortured by their inability to understand what the Other truly wants from them (*Che vuoi?*). Truman does not lose his grip on reality in a psychotic break; rather, he becomes a textbook neurotic, obsessively tracking the structural loops of his prison.



Picture 2. Truman listens to the suspicious radio



Picture 3. Everything is planned

reappearance of a specific yellow Volkswagen, a scooter rider, and a man carrying a briefcase. He realizes that his environment is not a natural world but a synchronized stage,

causing him to treat every social interaction as a potential threat. His clinical anxiety spikes because the "mirror" of Seahaven no longer reflects a comforting image of wholeness, but rather a terrifying matrix of total surveillance. As Lacan observed in his foundational lecture on psychoses, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III: The Psychoses* (1955-1956): *"The neurotic is the person who occupies himself with the question of his own existence... it is a question that speech addresses to being from the position of the subject."* (Jacques Lacan, 1993, p. 171)

This existential question reaches a clinical turning point during the climax of his bathroom mirror monologues. At the end of his astronaut performance, Truman stops speaking, leans his face incredibly close to the glass, and stares directly into the hidden camera lens embedded behind his reflection. After a long, heavy silence, he softly mutters: *"That one's for free."* This chilling moment signifies the ultimate rupture of his self-perception. Truman no longer views his reflection as a site of private comfort or an idealized ego-ideal; instead, he consciously recognizes that the mirror is a hostile instrument of the Other. By addressing the camera directly, Truman shifts from being a passive object of the global gaze to an active challenger of the panopticon. His "I" is completely fragmented as he realizes his entire life has been an engineered project for external consumption. This spatial alienation and tracking of hidden cameras prove that the ego is always a fundamentally hostile construct imposed upon the subject by an external force, forcing Truman to realize that to find his true identity, he must completely destroy the mirror world of Seahaven.

2. Christof and the Symbolic Order: Authority, Law, and Psychological Control

To analyze Truman Burbank's containment within Seahaven, his environment must be analyzed not merely as a physical television set, but as a literalized manifestation of the Lacanian Symbolic Order. The Symbolic Order represents the complete structure of language, social laws, cultural conventions, and institutional authorities that actively pre-program human subjectivity. In



Picture 4. The God of This world

The Truman Show, Christof functions as the absolute personification of the Big Other. From his complete control room, Christof organizes the script and establishes the "Law" of Seahaven. Truman is born into this pre-existing world; his name, career, and marriage are pre-programmed, illustrating how the Symbolic order shapes a subject's behavior before they achieve self-awareness (Lacan, 2006, p. 431). Operating as an unfeeling, automated machine, Seahaven functions independently of Truman's actual human emotions (Lacan, 1991, p. 220).

Christof's authority operates through the Name-of-the-Father (Nom-du-Père), the paternal function that enforces structural castration by limiting the subject's desire (Chiesa, 2007, p. 55).

To anchor Truman within Seahaven, Christof engineers a foundational childhood trauma: the staged drowning of Truman's father. This weaponized aquaphobia introduces a systemic prohibition, a paternal *"No"* that marks the sea as an unpassable boundary (Fink, 1995, p. 28). The shaky, desaturated cinematography of this sequence highlights how this trauma anchors Truman's persona to the island through guilt.

When Truman later fights and attempts to sail away, Christof violently reinforces this Law by commanding, *"Increase the wind... Do it!"* The high-angle "God's Eye" shots reduce Truman's boat to a helpless speck, visualizing the Big Other's desperate attempt to domesticate Truman's awakening drive through a simulated storm (Miller, 2000, p. 18). While the Lacanian Gaze (*le regard*) is traditionally hidden, Christof externalizes it through 5,000 hidden cameras, turning Truman into an object captured within the visual field of the Big Other. The true nature of this script is exposed at 00:29:38, when an accidental radio frequency broadcasts: *"He's heading west on Stewart. Stand by all extras."* The high-angle tracking shot visualizes Seahaven as a firm, controlled grid, shattering Truman's illusion of free will.

Because Christof's Symbolic Order is an artificial construct, it is prone to systemic glitches that puncture its whole narrative (Copjec, 1994, p. 34). When a studio light labeled "Sirius" falls from the sky (00:03:26), Truman faces an object his vocabulary cannot categorize. This structural slip exposes the truth that the Big Other is barred (A); it is an inconsistent construct that fails to fully account for reality (Žižek, 1989, p. 162). The resulting collapse triggers a deep state of subjective anxiety, an instinctive reaction to the eruption of the Real that cannot deceive (Lacan, 2014, p. 76). This de-substantiation of reality is crystallized when Meryl breaks character during a domestic fight to deliver a product placement for Mococoa. Framed directly looking at a hidden camera, Meryl is unmasked as a scripted signifier of commodity capitalism rather than a wife.

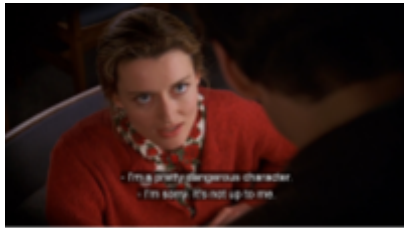


Picture 6. Marlon betrays Truman's trust

When Truman attempts to confront a police officer (00:52:04), the officer's unjustified, scripted familiarity uses a claustrophobic composition to show the Symbolic Order invading Truman's private space. To repair these cracks, Christof speaks directly through Marlon's earpiece on a fog-shrouded bridge (00:57:50), whispering, *"The last thing I'd ever do is lie to you."* The medium lens ironically lends sincerity to a fake moment, demonstrating the Father using false intimacy to re-stabilize the script and maintain psychological control over the subject.

3. The Disruption of Seahaven and the Drive Toward the Real

Truman always paid attention to one girl, his college friend named Lauren Garland. Truman's interest in her identifies her as the objet petit a, the object of desire that represents the



Picture 7. An Anomaly in
The script

lack of reality of himself. She answered Truman with *"I'm not allowed to talk to you, I'm sorry. It's not up to me."* It is not that Lauren is not interested in him, nor does she want to talk to him, but Christof's authority dictates the rule of symbolic order. Her statement, "it is not up to me," highlights the subject's lack of agency when suppressed by the law. The scene uses high-angle shots of Lauren, making her appear

submissive to the rules. Their interaction makes them both feel isolated from the rest of the world, emphasizing that for Truman, the only thing that feels real in that moment is the forbidden connection with Lauren. *"The real is the impossible. It is not in the name of a simple obstacle we hit our heads up against, but in the name of the logical obstacle of what, in the symbolic, declares itself to be impossible."* (Lacan, 2007, p. 129).

Continuing on the beach, they both really fell in love. Lauren, with the actual name Sylvia, is exposing the big other, which is the systems that monitor and dictate Truman's life this whole time. The heavy darkness of the beach and low lighting, it creates a sense of urgency and instability. The dark background symbolizes the real



Picture 8. Sylvia exposes
The Big Other

existence outside of the environment, the controlled environment of Seahaven. Lauren said, *"Everybody knows everything you do. They're pretending. Understand?"* Lauren is exposing another big other. By telling him that everyone is pretending, she reveals that his reality is a hollow construction of symbolic order. It is very different from the bright and shadowless environment during the

day at Seaheaven, at this scene, the unilluminated beach was enveloped in dense darkness.

Truman and Sylvia were separate from the town's artificial light. The lack of this kind of artificial light symbolizes a significant change in the visual style. It was the very first time that Truman went to a place where Christof's production team could never light up entirely, which represents the 'real world', the place that is not being surveyed. The camera movement changed from smooth, exact following shot to unstable handheld, fretted medium shot. The scene moves with an unsteady handheld style, creating a mental panic and urgent atmosphere. This style change reflects the inner line defense of the Truman collapse. The border of the frame is choking; two characters are being squeezed together, as if the camera tried to interrupt their dialogue. Amid the night sky, dark blue ocean, and darkness, Sylvia's clothing built a sharp visual contrast. Her dress broke the scene-setting rule. Audience's attention was instantly attracted to her, and

marked her as an invasive element that could never mix with Seaheaven's colour scheme. In The Truman Show's logic system, the ocean is the symbol of trauma and imprisonment, triggering Truman's fear of water. Nevertheless, the romantic moment between Truman and Sylvia is a breakthrough placed into the profound darkness. Truman's awokeness was connected directly with the outer frightening, unscripted world.

Before finding out something weird, there are a lot of symbols that are used and a little bit exposing the scripture world. Somehow, it will never be perfect; there will always be something off. At the beginning of this film, Truman appears small and vulnerable within his environment by using a high-angle wide shot. The wide framing shows the emptiness of the street, highlighting the isolation. In Lacan's theory, the symbolic is the structured reality that someone lives in. *"The real is the surplus of life that escapes the net of language; it is the raw jouissance that the symbolic order attempts to domesticate."* (Miller, 2000, p. 18). Truman's attempt to go in the elevator eventually breaks the construct. The elevator is actually a break room for the crew. When the door is open, Truman sees the unseen world. Truman meets his dead father, who reappears on the way to work as a homeless man. This medium shot captures the traumatic intrusion of the real.



Picture 9. A glitch
In the matrix



Picture 10. The Final Bow

After knowing a lot of oddities in Seahaven, Truman tries to run away from structured life. He is doing a lot of things to get out of Seahaven. Christof, as the creator of the world, does not want him to be free, so he gives obstacles when Truman is trying to escape on the boat. *"Increase the wind.. Do it.."* Then thunder and storm come to Truman when he is on the boat. This man-made storm functions as a physical manifestation to say no and take back the subject to the script. The way Truman is spontaneous really affects the storyline. Truman's boat crashes the sky, but actually only a painted wall at the edge of the made world. He finds a hidden staircase leading to a door labeled exit, then he does a final bow to his audience and steps into the real world with his iconic line, *"In case I don't see ya, good afternoon, good evening, and good night."* His final action with a wide shot placed him in the middle of the frame with a flat blue background. The effect of the vignette makes the atmosphere more sad, as a reminder to the viewer that we are still watching this through Christof's cameras. The cinematography forces the real-world audience to feel the guilt of being the watchers.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully answered our primary objective, which was to uncover the psychological reasons why Truman Burbank had to flee Seahaven in the film "The Truman Show" (1998) through Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory. Essentially, Truman flees not only because he sees physical strangeness around him, but also because of an inner need for freedom. This study also successfully fills a gap not yet explored by other researchers by focusing on Sylvia's role as objet petit a. Sylvia's presence creates a sense of "something missing" in Truman's seemingly perfect life, and this is the key to destroying Truman's imaginary world and disrupting the symbolic rules of life that director Christof had carefully crafted.

Truman's psychological journey transforms him from a constrained boy to a free man. Initially, Truman's life at Seahaven is highly artificial, resembling a mirror stage where he feels happy while actually being fooled. Once he realizes there are hidden cameras everywhere, he becomes anxious and suspicious. Coupled with "errors" on the studio set, such as stage lights falling from the sky and product advertisements forced on him by his wife, Truman realizes that Christof's artificial world is riddled with loopholes and lies. Through a romantic moment with Sylvia on a dark beach, Truman finally makes a bold decision at the end of the film. He breaks through the false sky and chooses to escape into the real world (The Real) to reclaim his freedom and right to his own life.

The moral message and social impact of this film are very relevant to our current digital lives. This film reminds us not to be trapped in "virtual prisons" like social media, where our privacy is often sacrificed for the sake of content or the profit of others. We are encouraged to be critical and not blindly accept "settings" or trends dictated by digital algorithms. In addition, subsequent studies can shift the analysis focus to the voyeur violence done toward the internal audience in this show and connect with other simulation shows, such as 'The Matrix', for further comparison and analysis.

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