4) Write an essay on Laila’s sexuality and her relationship with her mother in Margarita with a Straw, comparing and contrasting the two bathing scenes (17:27-18:40 and 1:13:27-1:15:05) or the two fight scenes they have: the one in New York about Laila looking at porn (53:42-55:09) and the one in Delhi about Laila being bisexual (1:15:06- 1:16:08). How do the scenes you have chosen affect you as a spectator? Be sure to think about the settings and editing of these scenes, the lighting and positioning of the actor’s bodies and where editing isn't used to convey dialogue, for example. You can use these scenes to discuss how they illuminate an idea or ideas you found important in Siebers “A Sexual Culture,” Wilkerson's "Embodiment," Williamson "Access," McRuer "Sexuality" or Garland Thomson on "Shape Structures Story."

Asexualization objectification

Doesnt ‘what happened to you’

In 'Margarita with a Straw,' the fight scenes between Laila and her mother in contrasting locales of New York and Delhi are deftly crafted to explore the themes of sexual autonomy (Siebers, 'A Sexual Culture'), cultural confrontation between Western individualism and Eastern familial obligations (Williamson, 'Access'), and the intersectionality of disability and personal identity (McRuer, 'Sexuality'). The film employs cinematic techniques of setting, lighting, and body language to not only illustrate the narrative of a young woman's quest for self-acceptance but also to reflect the scholarly discourse on the shape of the disabled body as a narrative in itself (Garland Thomson, 'Shape Structures Story'), providing a nuanced portrayal of the often invisible struggle for sexual identity within the disabled community.

**Prompt Number 4:**

In today's world, movies are more than just entertainment. They make us think and challenge our views on what's considered 'normal'. "Margarita with a Straw" is a great example of this. It’s centered around ‘Laila,’ an Indian woman with cerebral palsy as the protagonist whose journey of self-discovery is interlaced with the complexities of disability and sexuality. This essay will examine the complex portrayal of Laila’s journey for sexual autonomy and identity against the contrasting cultural backdrops of New York, a representation of the West, and Delhi, a representation of the East, as shown in the emotional fight scenes with her mother. These pivotal moments, will be analyzed through the frameworks provided by Siebers’ discourse on sexual culture, McRuer’s exploration of disability and sexuality, Williamson’s insights into access and autonomy, and Garland Thomson’s examination of body narratives. In doing so, this analysis will talk about how “Margarita with a Straw” helps create a more inclusive visual culture and offers a profound commentary on the intersection of personal and cultural identity.

The narrative of "Margarita with a Straw" is centered around Laila, portrayed with compelling authenticity by Kalki Koechlin. Laila's aspirations and desires are outlined against the vivid backdrop of Delhi University, where she is presented as a complex individual with goals, abilities, and a growing curiosity about her sexuality, rather than just a character with a disability.This initial setting allows us to see her life in India, as well as the standards and conventions of Indian society, which places a strong emphasis on collective identity and family honour. Her interactions, both with her supporting family and with the less accommodating outside world, provide insight into the various ways her disability intersects with her daily life. She has goals of her own, friends, and a crush on a band's lead singer, just like most young adults. The movie doesn't hold back in portraying Laila as a whole person—one who defies the social standard that sees people with disabilities as desexualized entities. It is here that Laila receives a scholarship to study in New York—representing a move to the West, to a city symbolic of freedom and individualism, which starkly contrasts with the collectivist ethos of her Indian upbringing. McRuer's "Sexuality" provides a critical backdrop to understanding this portrayal, highlighting how disability and sexual identity intersect and are often marginalized in mainstream discourse.

In "Margarita with a Straw," a pivotal moment that encapsulates Laila's struggle for independence and autonomy is shown in the New York bathroom scene. The confrontation extends beyond her sexuality, encompassing the broader aspects of her independence and the clash with her mother's values. The scene unfolds with Laila's mother discovering that her daughter has been surfing porn websites and her reaction—accusatory and tinged with disgust—reflects a deep-seated revulsion that is magnified by her utterance of “Chee,” ("Yuck") a sentiment that echoes later when Laila's sexual identity comes into question. This exclamation, laden with cultural and generational contempt for what is perceived as perverse, immediately positions Laila's sexuality and her choices as something to be ashamed of, not just in the eyes of her mother, but within the conservative echoes of Indian society. Here, the movie confronts the audience to the harsh reality of sexual shaming, which is especially prevalent in non-Western cultures like India where women's sexual expressions are frequently viewed with contempt. This also serves as a reminder that even though they’re in America, in the West, the values, pressures, and shame created by Indian society still have a grip.

The tension in this scene is palpable, not merely due to the subject matter but due to the interplay of cinematography and performance. Even while the lighting is still soft and natural, the atmosphere is everything but serene, highlighting Laila's mental and physical vulnerability. This visual choice serves to underscore the raw confrontation between Laila and her mother, highlighting the stark difference in their perspectives. The vulnerability of Laila, submerged in bathwater and discovered in a moment of private exploration, is juxtaposed against her mother’s shocked and traditional perspective, captured through tight framing that intensifies the scene's intimacy and discomfort. Her mother's authority is not just in her standing over Laila when she was yelling but in her assertion that privacy is a privilege Laila has forfeited—by virtue of her disability and dependence. Her mother's angry response: "Privacy? "You want privacy from me?!" draws attention to the assumption in Indian society that kids, no matter how old they are or how capable they are, are to remain subservient and transparent to their elders—a cultural norm that often undermines their individuality and autonomy of the younger generation. Her mother's body language oscillates between invasive authority and bewildered concern, while Laila's reflects a spectrum from defiance to shame for owning her sexuality, emotions that the viewer is privy to in real time.

This infringement upon Laila's privacy, her body, and her right to explore her sexual identity ties back to the readings, particularly the infantilization of disabled individuals. It is dehumanising to assume that people with disabilities, because of their dependence on others, should have no secrets or private lives. This is an issue Siebers speaks to when he discusses the sexual culture for disabled people, where the struggle for autonomy involves both sexual identity and the fundamental recognigition of personhood.

Laila's disobedience at this scene is a crucial instance of resistance. Her demand to be recognised as an individual with the ability to make her own decisions is reflected in her cries for privacy and fury over the intrusion. This instance is representative of the challenge that people with disabilities have in claiming their agency in societies that frequently see them as children forever. The film, through this raw exchange, positions Laila at the forefront of her own narrative, one in which she fights against expectations from her family as well as cultural conventions that aim to define her.

The second pivotal confrontation between Laila and her mother in "Margarita with a Straw" unfolds in the familial setting of their Delhi home, a space steeped in the traditions and expectations of Indian culture. Unlike the New York bathroom scene, which is imbued with a sense of intimate privacy, the Delhi scene is staged within the communal area of the kitchen and dining room, areas associated with family unity and domesticity. The lighting here is starkly different; it's brighter, more revealing, and less forgiving, paralleling the harsh scrutiny Laila faces from her mother about her sexuality—a stark contrast to the softer illumination of the New York scene, which highlighted Laila's exploration of her sexual autonomy.

In this scene, the dialogue and body language speak volumes. As Laila bathes her mother, we see a reversal of traditional caregiving roles, challenging the infantilization often faced by disabled individuals, as discussed in Wilkerson's "Embodiment." This act of care is a poignant reminder of Laila's agency and maturity, juxtaposed with her mother's inability to reconcile Laila's complex identity with societal norms. When Laila reveals her relationship with Khanum, her mother's immediate reaction, a curt "Chee," (“Yuck”) echoes her earlier disgust. The repetition of "Chee" in both scenes is significant; it's a word that transcends language barriers and conveys a visceral disgust. In New York, it’s a reaction to Laila's viewed consumption of pornography, and in Delhi, it’s in response to her coming out as bisexual—indicating her mother's consistent repulsion toward expressions of sexuality that deviate from the heteronormative and able-bodied ideals prevalent in Indian culture. This unchanging reaction symbolizes a deep-seated cultural and generational gap that Laila's mother is unwilling to bridge, reflecting a broader societal stance on queerness and disability that is often marred by prejudice and misunderstanding, resonant with McRuer's discussion in "Sexuality."

The positioning of the actors during the Delhi confrontation furthers the sense of opposition. Laila is often shown from a lower angle, sitting, while her mother stands, a subtle yet effective reminder of the power dynamics at play, similar to the previous scene where she was standing over Laila. The mother's stance, with her back turned or her hand raised to halt Laila's words, visually enforces the cultural norm of silencing uncomfortable truths, as explored in McRuer's "Sexuality." This contrasts with the New York scene, where the close-up shots and the cramped bathroom space force the characters—and the audience—into a confrontational proximity that cannot be easily escaped.

The contrast in the mother’s engagement with Laila between the scenes is telling. In the New York scene, her anger is palpable; there is a confrontation that, while painful, signifies engagement. In the Delhi scene, her denial and silence—signified by the literal drowning out of Laila's voice with the sound of the blender—illustrates a refusal to acknowledge Laila's autonomy and identity. This act of silencing is a profound metaphor for the societal erasure of the voices and experiences of disabled individuals as explored in Wilkerson's "Embodiment."

Both scenes expose the intersectional struggle of Laila’s identity as a disabled, bisexual woman. However, they also reveal a stark divergence in her mother’s approach: from direct confrontation to an evasive silence, from a heated argument to a refusal to engage. This reflects the complex layers of acceptance and denial that run through the film, mirroring the complex tapestry of Indian societal norms and the multifaceted struggles faced by the queer and disabled community. The New York scene is defined by a sense of discovery and Laila's assertion of her privacy, while the Delhi scene is fraught with cultural expectations and the denial of Laila's adult identity. Through these contrasting moments, "Margarita with a Straw" not only provides a profound commentary on the intersection of disability, sexuality, and culture but also challenges the viewer to reflect on their own biases and assumptions, as Garland Thomson's "Shape Structures Story" urges us to consider the narrative power of body shapes in constructing identities and stories.

In closing, "Margarita with a Straw" serves as a profound exploration of Laila's identity and autonomy as framed within the film's contrasting cultural settings. The stark juxtaposition of Laila's confrontations with her mother, from a private New York bathroom to the familial space of a Delhi kitchen, illuminates the challenges posed by the intersection of disability, sexuality, and cultural norms. Through these scenes, the film invites a critical examination of the ways in which non-Western societies grapple with notions of autonomy and privacy, particularly for disabled individuals. It provides a cinematic representation that amplifies the voices of those often relegated to the margins of visual culture. "Margarita with a Straw" thus stands as a significant contribution to a more inclusive and empathetic understanding of the diverse tapestry of human experience.

Word Count: 1769

When Laila reveals her relationship with Khanum, her mother's immediate reaction, a curt "Yuck," echoes her earlier disgust, revealing a consistent cultural repulsion towards non-heteronormative relationships—a sentiment that Siebers identifies as a barrier to recognizing the sexual rights of disabled individuals.

a little more information about the scene. once shes out of the shower her mother realizes Lailas gold chain is missing and when Lailas fesses up to having sold it to but an ipad her mother is upset and says that that was lailas grandmothers chain and 'What has happened to you Lailu?' Laila tries explaining she wanted the ipad for her studies but her mother cuts her off and says "Studies? surfing porn sites is studying?" followed by 'you should be ashamed of yourself'. Laila then get very upset and yells "How dare you? This is my privacy." to which her mother repleis '"Privacy? you want privacy from me?!" "I'll give you a tigh slap if you talk to me like that" and the scene ends.

What i would like for you to do is rewrite the analysis for this scene taking the new information ive provided into consideration. Also look at the prompt which states that the two scenes need to be compared and contrasted so think about how youll be doing that in the future few paragraphs. Remember the outline, the readings, and all the previous information.Write about 500 words.

Some of the things i think you can add are (keep all the points you already mentioned about the lighting, setting, sexualization, readings) just add more:

The infantilization of disabled people, how because she relies on her mother to help and to support her(something like this is in one of the readings try to look) her mother believes she doesn't have a right to privacy. Touch up on how much this could be an Indian mother thing (becasue of strong familial values which manifest in ways like youre always told to ‘respect your elders’ and never talk back even when you have a right to) and how much of it because shes disabled

Talk about sexualization and how it is shamed especially in non-Western societies (especially Indian), the fact that her mother said “Yuck” when she looked at the site which is the same thing she said when Laila came out to her (but we can talk about this is later paragraphs when we’re actually comparing and contrasting the two scenes). Laila’s sexual identidy isnt validated by her mother because of two reasons one being from india and from an older generation her mother doesnt believe in owning your sexuality but instead finds it perverse, and something shameful that her grown daughter is doing.

Now we’ll continue writing the next paragraph, consider the prompt question, the thesis statement, the readings, the info provided previously, everything you found online and the outline. We need to analyze the second fight scene but most importantly compare and contrast the two scenes as the prompt says. We should try answering the questions in the prompt.

A little more about the scene: It starts off in the shower but this time Lailas the one bathing her mother. Laila tries coming out to her mother by saying shes Bi but her mother thinks Laila is saying shes become a maid because Bai in hindi means maid so she laughs by saying everyones made her a maid too. But then Laila tries explaining it to her again but she doesnt know what Bi means, so Laila just blurts “Khanums my girlfriend”. Her mother looks back at her and looks away and just says “Chee”(“Yuck” in english) which is the same reaction she had when she saw the porn website. The scene then switches to Laila sitting at the dinner table while her mothers in the kitchen, serving her food, and Laila says “Not one Mom, youre being a hypocrite” to which her mom replies “Whos put this in your head?Theres nothing hypocritical here”. Laila says “Ofcourse there is” her mom puts her hand up and says “Don’t argue Laila . This isnt normal.” Laila then replies “Thats what the world said about me too Whats your problem now” her mother just trunks around and turns the blender on, which makes a loud noise as a way of indicating the conversation is over and she doesnt want to talk aboti it. Laila then knocks some sups of the table and tries to get up to leave. Later at the dinner table when the entire family and Khanum is present the little brother is pleading with the mother to get tickets for a cricket match and the argument he uses is “This is Khunum’s first trip to India How can we let her leave without watching a match” To which her mother just gets up and leaves the table.

Some thing you could look at in this analysis and compare is the similarities in her mothers reaction, how sexuality and homosexuality, disability are all looked doen upon in Indian culture. The differences hoe this time her mother didnt even want to speak about it vs last time her mother was yelling at her and it was more heated. Also look at the images im sending to try and get a sens eof the lighting and positioning of the scene. Anlyse the different things asked for in the prompts and also connect it back to the readings. Write about 500 words