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Toward a Fluid Cinematic Spectatorship and Desire: Revisiting Laura Mulvey's Psychoanalytic Film Theories

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Abstract

This thesis project re-evaluates Laura Mulvey's film theories regarding psychoanalysis and the "male gaze," first found in her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975). By re-evaluating the limitations of Mulvey's use of the Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic model this project seeks to understand the desires and processes of identification of cinematic spectators who reject the ideological imperative of the "male gaze". As many critics have noted, Mulvey's initial examination of cinema does not account for LGBTQ+ spectators and/or black spectators who occupy looking relations that reject cis-normative and heteronormative white Hollywood cinematic conventions. From this standpoint, we begin the first chapter by critiquing Mulvey's gendering of cinematic conventions found in her theory of the "male gaze," which does not address male masochistic desire, female desire or queer desire. In the second chapter, we continue to critique the rigid heterosexual binary of Mulvey's work by articulating a new other-critical form of looking relations that derives from bell hooks' term "the oppositional gaze". Finally, in the third chapter we investigate the importance of fluidity in the cinematic gaze that can be found in LGBTQ+ spectatorship. In this final chapter, we address the "lesbian look" as a form of oppositional gaze that works against Mulvey's "masculinized" female spectator. The overall objective of this project is to prioritize theoretical models that investigate cinematic spectatorship and desire as fluid rather than returning to rigid classifications of the gaze theory that limit sexuality, gender and/or race.

Summary for Lay Audience

When watching film, most people become engulfed in the cinematic narrative and forget to consider the diverse experiences of other spectators. Why is it important to understand different spectatorial positions in the cinematic experience and how can a person's sexuality, gender and/or race influence the way they engage with filmic images? By re-evaluating the Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic framework of Laura Mulvey's "male gaze" theory in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), I seek to develop a more inclusive fluid/free model for understanding cinematic gazing which includes Black spectators and LGBTQ+ spectators. Briefly put, Mulvey's theory of the "male gaze" argues that classical Hollywood cinema controls and entraps our desire: there is an imperative for the active male spectator to desire and objectify the passive female screen image. However, this project points to more fluid spectatorial positions that reject the ideological function of narrative cinema.

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Chapter 1: Complicating Laura Mulvey's Gendering of the Gaze and Spectatorial
Desire

> Watching a well-made film, we don't sit by as spectators; we participate
> Alfred Hitchcock, "Why Thrillers Thrive" (1936).

> Only by broadening our notions of spectatorship and reception to include different groups and arenas can we begin
> to understand the complex factors that have shaped-and continue to shape-the ideological direction of American
> Cinema (107).
> Steven J. Ross, "The Revolt of the Audience: Reconsidering Audiences and Reception during the Silent
> Era" (1999).

Section 1.1: The Cinematic Gaze and Psychoanalytic Film Theory

In the 1960s and 70s, the emergence of feminist film theory in the U.K. sought to critique

the societal conventions and sexist stereotypes mirrored in classical Hollywood movies. In the

larger cultural context of the second wave of feminism and Marxist-psychoanalytic "screen

theory", British feminist film theorists led by Laura Mulvey appropriated the concepts of

Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis to investigate the imbalance of sexual hierarchies

reflected in the politics of the gaze projected by classical Hollywood narratives[1]. In "White

Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory" (1986), Jane

Gaines posits that theorists like Mulvey were interested in how the perspectives of the camera in

classic Hollywood narratives formed an unconscious representation of patriarchal desire. As

Gaines conveys, for Mulvey:

> [the patriarchal] viewing vantage points control the female body on the screen
>
> and privilege the visual position (the gaze) of the male character(s) within the
>
> film. The governing "look" of the male spectator in the film merges with the

---

[1] In the 1960s and 70s, feminist film theory initially looked to sociology rather than using psychoanalytic methodologies. During this time, feminist film theory was mainly concerned with critiquing sexist stereotypes and female representation found in cinema.

spectator's viewing position in such a way that the spectator sees as the

character sees (200).

As Gaines suggests, the gaze of the camera in classic Hollywood narratives caters to the male

spectator because it forces men to associate with a powerful male character on screen. In her

feminist adaptation of psychoanalysis, Mulvey sought to critique the patriarchal gaze of classical

Hollywood cinema. Mulvey's theories regarding the gaze in classical Hollywood have been

massively influential in establishing a psychoanalytic framework in feminist film theory that

dismantles sexual objectification of women in films[2]. In 1975, Mulvey's essay, "Visual Pleasure

and Narrative Cinema," first published in the influential British film theory journal *Screen*

provided a crucial theoretical shift in feminist film theory by showing how the misrepresentation

of women in media was psychologically driven by heteronormativity found in classical

Hollywood cinema.

Within feminist theory, Sigmund Freud is troubling because of his patriarchal over-

coding of the unconscious and desire; however both of his concepts are important for

understanding the foundations of gender and sexuality[3]. Mulvey's notions of the "male gaze"

and spectatorial desire are heavily influenced by Freud's concept of scopophilia found in "Three

Essays on The Theory of Sexuality" (1905)[4].

---

[2] It is important to acknowledge Juliet Mitchell's early work *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* which was published in 1974, a year before Mulvey's work. Mitchell's hypothesis re-evaluates feminist criticism surrounding Freudian psychoanalysis and articulates a new approach to understanding psychoanalysis in feminist theory. In her work, Mitchell underlines how psychoanalysis is "not a recommendation for a patriarchal society but an analysis of one. If we are interested in understanding and challenging this oppression of women, we cannot afford to neglect it [psychoanalysis]" (Mitchell, *I*). Mitchell's groundbreaking work has helped reframe the use of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis in early sexuality and gender studies by prioritizing a psychoanalytic model that investigates the formation of masculine and feminine identities as a reflection of patriarchy.

[3] Feminist theorists Gayle Rubin and Luce Irigaray both acknowledge that Freud's psychosexual theories actually had intrinsically feminist implications. Both believe that Freud misinterpreted his own theories on sexuality, because of his own patriarchal unconscious.

[4] Both theorists (Freud and Lacan) point to desire being a drive in humans to fill feelings of incompleteness. In his seminar on the ego in Freud's theory, Lacan notes that, "Desire is a relation of being to lack. This lack is the lack of being properly speaking. It isn't a lack of this or that, but lack of being whereby the being exists…Desire, a function

In his early work, Freud underlines a psychoanalytic theory regarding the sexual development of children. Here, Freud believes that during the process of mental development children experience the Oedipal complex in which they partake in a sexual desire of their opposite sex parent. The Oedipal complex is defined by Freud as, "the child's sexual impulses towards his parents, which are as a rule already differentiated owing to the attraction of the opposite sex- the son being drawn towards his mother and the daughter towards the father" (227). In this passage, Freud contends that there is a natural desire in a child's psyche to be sexually attracted to the parent of the opposite sex. According to Freud, children can experience sexual pleasure by looking at their opposite sexed parent in the Oedipal complex, which he defines as "scopophilia" (157). For Freud, scopophilia derives from the basic instincts of sexuality that are found in children. Freud's psychoanalytic theory proposes that children desire voyeuristic activities in which they want to see the "private and forbidden" parts of other people's bodies (Mulvey, 17). According to Freud, scopophilic desires should never be considered perversions as long as the sexual desires are carried out by the act of looking, as long as certain rules are followed. As Freud states:

> Visual impressions remain the most frequent pathway along which libidinal
>
> excitation is aroused; indeed, natural selection counts upon the accessibility

central to all human experience, is the desire for nothing nameable. And at the same time this desire lies at the origin of every variety of animation" (223). Freud and Lacan's notions of desire are similar, yet different. For Freud, desire is an expression of human sexuality. In "The Three Essays on Sexuality", Freud notes that children use their sexual urges to formulate desires for their opposite sexed parent (refer to my analysis of Freud's Oedipal complex). In comparison, Lacan states that desire cannot be understood purely through sexuality. Rather, a person has a desire to be recognized by the "*Other*" and to desire the "*desire[s] of the Other*" ("What is a Picture?"*,* 115). Interestingly, as my second reader Janelle Blankenship pointed out, Lacan discusses desire filmically. The key terms of the equation are animation, image, and screen. As Hanjo Berressem writes in "Lights! Camera! Action! The Luminous Worlds of Jacques Lacan and Gilles Deleuze," in his seminars Lacan provocatively uses a "luminist lyricism" when illustrating the gaze and desire for his students. As Beressem writes, "Lacan world of desire is a fully cinematic, luminiscent world" (Berresem 55). One might also say that in his seminars and schematic drawings or diagrams, Lacan not only illustrates the "field of the gaze" and the "subject of desire" - he also gestures towards a new screen poetics. As Kaja Silverman has also powerfully noted, for Lacan "the screen ... gives shape and significance to how we are seen by others as such, how we define and interact with the agency to whom we attribute our visibility, and how we perceive the world" (Silverman 174).

of this pathway…. On the other hand, this pleasure in looking [scopophilia]

becomes a perversion [a] if it is restricted exclusively to the genitals, or [b]

if it is connected with the overriding of disgust (as in the case of voyeurs or

people who look on at excretory functions) (156-157).

In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), Mulvey uses Freud's notion of scopophilia to underscore how cinematic images in classical Hollywood narratives objectify women. More specifically, Mulvey believes that scopophilic pleasures in the cinematic experiences are inherently male driven. As Mulvey posits, "At this point he associated scopophilic with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze. His particular examples centre around children…[their] curiosity about other people's genital and bodily functions, about the presence or absence of the penis and retrospectively, about the primal scene" (17). Mulvey emphasizes how the Freudian scopophilic drive castrates woman due to them lacking a penis. For Mulvey, scopophilia is crucial in understanding the male gaze, since it reinforces a gender division in spectatorial desire.

In "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" (1966), Jacques Lacan expands on Freud's psychoanalytic theories regarding sexual identification in infants. Lacan's work develops a theory called the "mirror stage" which derives from Freud's concept of the Oedipal complex. In this theory of the mirror stage, Lacan translates and adapts Freud's account of the stages of a child's psychological development. According to Lacan, the child recognizes themselves when looking into a mirror, since they are able to identify with an image of their whole body. It is important to acknowledge that within Lacan's mirror stage the child identifies with the image even if it is an image of the child looking. The child's identification with the image of them looking will always be alienating since it is separate from

the actual child. In Lacanian terms, the alienating identification of the child and the image is the imaginary foundation of the child's psyche. As Lacan notes:

> Indeed, for the *imagos*- whose veiled faces it is our privilege to see in outline on our daily experience and in the penumbra of symbolic efficacity- the mirror-image would seem to be the threshold of the visible world, if we go by the mirror disposition that the *imago of one's own body* presents in hallucinations or dreams, whether it concerns its individual features, or even its infirmities, or its object-projections; or if we observe the role of the mirror apparatus in the appearances of the *double,* in which psychical realities, however heterogeneous, are manifested" (3)

In this passage, Lacan notes the images of the imaginary are inherently sight-biased. Thus, Lacan agrees with Freud about the predominance of the sense of sight in a child's understanding of sexual difference. In the mirror stage, Lacan theorizes that an infant is able to gain a mental and physical representation of the "I" (2). Additionally, Lacan's mirror stage implies that the child is continually dependent on other people in the understanding of their identity. Furthermore, Lacan suggests that people's desires are manifested through the desires of other people. However, Lacan's mirror stage theorizes that the child's creation of their ego is narcissistic in nature and requires imagination in order to perceive the perfect version of themselves. Lacan states:

> The mirror stage…[is] caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic- and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development (4).

In this passage, Lacan defines the imagination of the ego as "phantasies" that fill the instability of the mirror stage (ibid). The "phantasies" of the ego are bodily and they range from the image of mastery in bodily wholeness or totality (the body without organs) to the image of the fragmented body, the "body without bits" (organs without a body).

Mulvey's 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" uses Lacan's theory regarding psychic development to show how the male gaze returns the male spectator to the early experiences with the mirror stage and self-identification[5]. Mulvey believes that the male gaze allows the male spectator to experience a substitute originary image of that ideal-ego: the image of mastery and wholeness which was once identified in the mirror stage (18). However, classical Hollywood cinema depicts the male protagonist as an ideal representation of masculinity, which causes the male spectator's "ideal ego" to feel "more complete, more perfect than they experience in their own body" (ibid). As shown, Mulvey adapts and "weaponizes" Lacan's concept of the mirror stage in her male gaze theory in order to formulate a psychoanalytic model that genders desire.

Although Mulvey critiques patriarchal society through a Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic lens, her theory of the "male gaze" ultimately masculinizes the film perspective, locking the spectator into the position of the heterosexual male. As she notes:

> In their traditional exhibitionist role women are said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness.* Women displayed as sexual objects is the leit-motif of erotic spectacle…She holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire. Mainstream film neatly combined spectacle and narrative ("Visual Pleasure", 19).

---

[5] Mulvey's use of Lacan's mirror stage theory is heavily influenced by Jean-Louis Baudry's *Ideological Effects on the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus* (1970) and Christian Metz's *Imaginary Signifier* (1977).

In this passage, Mulvey contends that the camera puts certain conventions of women's body on display in order to appeal to male viewers. Furthermore, Mulvey posits that the production of films cannot only be understood from a cultural framework, but must also be analyzed through its depictions of gender roles and how these affect the spectator (whether male or female). As Mulvey states: "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly" (ibid).

Mulvey notes that the female's passive role within cinematic narratives is influenced by exhibitionism, a passive type of gaze that is linked to a narcissistic desire to become objectified in the male gaze ("Visual Pleasure", 19). Classical Hollywood narratives provide their male viewers a twofold opportunity for scopophilia: both pleasure in looking at "sexualized" images of women and pleasure in looking at "ego-ized" images of powerful men. This is reflected in "Creative Writers and Daydreaming" (1908), where Freud writes that the protagonist of most fantasies is "His Majesty, The Ego" (425). Freud uses the term "His Majesty, The Ego" to explain the socio-psychological relationship between the male ego's desire to identify with a narrative's powerful male character in order to remain in a position of dominance over the passive female image (ibid). Mulvey's argument can be used to better understand a key scene in Alfred Hitchcock's film *Psycho* (1960), wherein the character Marion is shown in a submissive position when getting undressed and entering the shower. According to Mulvey, Marion's vulnerability invites the male spectator to assume an authoritative role in their cinematic viewing and achieve sexual pleasure in the visual portrayal of a half-naked female character. In addition, Hitchcock plays with the male gaze by not showing Marion fully nude which teases the sexual desires of heterosexual male spectators. In this scene, Norman enters the bathroom and precedes

to kill Marion with a knife, showing a man in a position of power over a woman. If we again conjure up the vulnerable female victim pictured in the famous shower scene in *Psycho,* we can better understand how Mulvey's psychoanalytic analysis of classical Hollywood cinema genders the notions of the gaze and spectatorial pleasure in order to critique the patriarchal conventions of the American culture industry. In this thesis, however, I contend that Mulvey's strict gendering comes at a price. As many other theorists have previously noted, Mulvey's initial examination of cinema only accounts for heterosexual experiences of the gaze and male spectatorial pleasure, although she does briefly as I will discuss in later chapters open up space for thinking about an alternative cinema, a counter-cinema that would operate outside of the restricted Hollywood system, and a "new language of desire" (59). This chapter of my thesis re-evaluates Mulvey's gendering of cinematic conventions and argues for the importance of articulating other positions of active desire, whether "feminine" or "perverse". By using Mulvey's work as a powerful point of departure to investigate alternative forms of cinematic spectatorship, I hope to lay the framework for thinking about a new critical gaze theory that explores fluid/free forms of looking relations in later chapters.

Section 1.2: The Female Gaze and Male Masochistic Desire in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940)

Psychoanalytic film theorists have suggested that both male and female spectators can identify with images presented in film which leads to masochistic pleasure[6]. Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" utilizes psychoanalytic concepts in her feminist

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[6] For example, see Tim Edwards' "Spectacular Pain: Masculinity, Masochism and Men in the Movies" (2008), Gaylyn Studlar's "Visual Pleasure and the Masochistic Aesthetic" (1985) and Ruth Mcphee's *Female Masochism in Film: Sexuality, Ethics and Aesthetics* (2014).

theory showing how the power of patriarchy influenced the construction of classic Hollywood films. Mulvey contends that classical Hollywood films portray women as objects of desire for the "male gaze" (19). It is important to note that Mulvey's approach to male power in classical Hollywood cinema is somewhat limited. More specifically, Mulvey does not take into account more playful sexual orientations and/or practices amongst spectators which may complicate their relationship to the image and the "male gaze". With that said, Mulvey does not acknowledge how men can also experience masochistic desire when they view submissive male protagonists in film.

In her seminal early essay, Mulvey analyzes the psychological and social ways in which classical Hollywood cinema constructs the ideal viewer. As stated earlier, Mulvey uses the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan to contend that classical and more recent cinematic narratives in Hollywood target heteronormative masculine sexual desires in the "male gaze" by portraying women characters as sexual objects (20). Furthermore, her work attempts to use psychoanalysis to deconstruct patriarchal norms in classic Hollywood films. Mulvey suggests that certain Hollywood cinematic narratives are erotic and sexual which help appeal to heterosexual men. In "Visual Pleasures", Mulvey states:

> According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures
> that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual
> objectification…The man controls the film fantasy and also emerges as the
> representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the
> spectator (ibid).

In this passage, Mulvey posits that spectatorial pleasure is often controlled by the male fantasy that limits women's agency both in the film's narrative and how it is perceived. According to

Mulvey, Hollywood films adhere to heterosexual masculinity by allowing men to both objectify women on the screen and identify themselves within the narrative (17). As a result, the false representation of women leads to the female protagonist becoming a masochistic subject to the "male gaze" (ibid).

Mulvey's 1975 essay has been influential in establishing a feminist theory that underlines how Hollywood cinema reproduces sexual inequalities in real world settings. Although Mulvey's psychoanalytic feminist film theory is important in understanding the patriarchal framework of Hollywood and a female spectator's potential masochistic pleasure, it does not allow for a full understanding of diverse spectatorial positions and desires, for example the masochistic desires of men. In "Deconstructing the Male: Masochism, Female Spectatorship, and the Femme Fatale in 'Fatal Attraction", 'Body of Evidence', and 'Basic Instinct'" (2008), Miranda Sherwin contends that Mulvey's theories regarding women's masochism only analyzes one side of spectatorial desire. Sherwin concludes that Mulvey genders desire in her critique of Hollywood cinema. More specifically, Sherwin notes that Mulvey assumes the masochistic desire of the spectator is fixed due to their gender and/or sex. Sherwin suggests that a better understanding of masochistic psychodynamics could help us see how masochism works more fully in film in relation to both sexes and all genders.[7] As she states:

> Moreover, by highlighting masochistic psychodynamics, these films depict
>
> binaries as constantly shifting and fluid rather than rigidly predetermined
>
> and fixed; therefore, although not destroying the binaries per se, these films
>
> expose gender as constructed and performative while simultaneously
>
> deconstructing heterosexual desire and the controlling male gaze (182).

---

[7] Also see Kaja Silverman's "Masochism and Male Subjectivity" (1988).

Sherwin claims there is a more fluid and "performative" depiction of gender binaries on screen. In short, it is not the male gaze alone that provides a critical investigation into the power dynamics of a female character. Arguably, the position of the powerful female character is important in understanding male masochistic desire, which operates outside the male gaze[8].

Turning to the crucial role played by powerful female characters on screen, we could argue that Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rebecca* (1940) defies Mulvey's notion of masculine authority in the male gaze for two reasons. As many film critics have noted, Hitchcock's film *Rebecca* was based on the 1938 novel written by Daphne du Maurier. Hitchcock's authority over the adaptation of the novel was limited, due to David Selznick's request to remain faithful to du Maurier's "female Gothic" text. In this case, Hitchcock's inability to govern the outcome of the cinematic narrative limited his role as the male director in control of the "male gaze". As critics have argued, Hitchcock was unable to fully control the female protagonist without changing du Maurier's novel. In her PhD thesis, *Classical Hollywood Film Directors' Female-as-Object Obsession and Female Director's Cinematic Response: A Deconstructionist Study of Six Films* (1996), Sharon Chapman claims that Hitchcock was unable to assert his own full masculine authority over the script of *Rebecca* and thus lost his ability to control the female protagonist and cater to the male gaze. She posits:

> Hitchcock claimed that the original text lacks humor and credited this lack
> to its feminine source…Because he worked with a woman's vision rather
> than his own, it detached authorial ownership and, especially in this case,
> gender ownership. Although Hitchcock attempted to make the text his own

---

[8] In Freud's chapter "The Sexual Aberrations" in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) he differentiates between pleasure through pain, which he defines as "algolagnia" and feelings of humiliation which he labels as masochism and sadism (157). Later Freud changes his formulations regarding masochism in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) stating that masochism can derive from the "death instinct" where it is at odds with the "object" (the mother) which leads to sadism (44).

by presenting his own image of woman, he was unable to attain complete

ownership (84).

We could extrapolate here to say that Hitchcock's lack of authority in *Rebecca* hindered his desire to completely "own" the male gaze in the narrative. Hitchcock's limited freedom vis-à-vis the cinematic narrative resulted in the female character Rebecca de Winter obtaining a more prominent position of authority within the film. Throughout the film, the dead wife Rebecca possesses a haunting sexual presence that can never be seen or contained, and as a result, she presents a threat to the male figures on screen. After the death of his first wife (Rebecca), one could say the male protagonist Maxim de Winter attempts to control the young character played by Joan Fontaine by making her a bride in order to limit her power status as a female, but in a sense Fontaine wreaks havoc in his own home (breaking family heirlooms and breaking down in tears – in the final scene the house itself bursts into flames). One could argue that both Maxim and Hitchcock attempt to contain female figures through a male gaze, but in the excessive female Gothic genre fail to do so.

Hitchcock's movie *Rebecca* is important for understanding the position of the powerful female character in classical Hollywood cinema. More importantly, *Rebecca* at least initially does not fit neatly into Mulvey's psychoanalytic model of a patriarchal film that positions the female protagonist as a castrated subject, objectified by the male spectator's gaze. Instead, the ghost of Rebecca is a threat to masculine identity both in the film and outside the film. The character Mrs. Danvers also limits the authority of masculine pleasure through her lesbian desire

for Rebecca[9]. In the film, Mrs. Danvers' presumed lesbian sexuality controls the power

dynamics of the male characters on screen. Numerous critics have argued that Mrs. Danvers'

dominant gaze overcodes the masculine perspective. As a result, male viewers take on a more a

passive role as spectators. In Hitchcock's film, Mrs. Danvers' lesbian desire is evident in the

scene where she provides Joan Fontaine's character a tour of Rebecca's room. Throughout the

scene Mrs. Danvers caresses Rebecca's clothing in a sexual manner to intimidate Joan

Fontaine's character. These sexually suggestive acts by Mrs. Danvers reaffirm the authoritative

power of lesbian desire in the cinematic narrative. Although Rebecca is physically absent, she is

imagined (through the eyes and words of Mrs. Danvers) to be an overbearing "watching," an

overbearing, stifling presence, constantly spying on the new marital couple. As Mrs. Danvers

states:

> Sometimes when I walk along the corridor, I fancy I hear her just behind me
>
> that quick light step. I couldn't mistake it anywhere not only in this room
>
> but all the rooms in the house. I can almost hear it now. Do you think the
>
> dead come back and watch the living?... Sometimes I wonder if she doesn't
>
> come back here demandingly… to watch you and Mr. De Winters together
>
> (*Rebecca* 1:09:04).

Joan Fontaine's character who desperately desires to live up to this "higher" standard of beauty,

is haunted by the presumed beauty and hypersexuality of Rebecca, filtered through the lesbian

desire of Mrs. Danvers. As evident in this quote, Rebecca's presence is so threatening to Joan

---

[9] John Orr's essay "The Look and the Gaze: Hitchcock and du Maurier" (2005) found in *Hitchcock and 20th Century Cinema* notes that the pre-existing homosexual relationship between Mrs. Danvers and Rebecca reinforces a queer narrative in Hitchcock's film which inscribes a lesbian gaze in a predominately masculinized film. He posits, "This was a relationship of look and gaze between two women haunted by the absent presence of a third. Housekeeper Mrs. Danvers (Judith Anderson) casts a perennial gaze, a gaze that judges, upon the interloper whom she hates and desires at the same time. After having nurtured and loved Rebecca, she preys upon her substitute, the young spouse whose look betrays anguish, uncertainty, doubt, insecurity" (84).

Fontaine's character since it is haunting and untraceable. It is important to note that Rebecca's haunting presence reaffirms her power as a queer female character who governs the narrative for cinematic spectators. In The *Women Who Knew Too Much* (1988), Tania Modelski contends that that it is visually impossible for the male spectator to gain visual power over Rebecca's character due to her absence in the film. In this case, the limited male gaze cannot visually control the development of Rebecca's character. As Modelski posits, "In *Rebecca,* however, the sexual woman is never seen, although her presence is strongly evoked throughout the film, and so it is impossible for any man to gain control over her in the usual classical narrative fashion" (52). Modelski theorizes that *Rebecca* was revolutionary in classical Hollywood cinema because it allowed the female spectators to associate themselves with a powerful female protagonist who was not limited by a male director.

In the 1940s, Hitchcock's production was revolutionary for female empowerment in Hollywood. Yet the film nevertheless depicted scenes that restricted Rebecca and Joan Fontaine's agency as female characters and reinscribed the "male gaze". Hitchcock's scenes that re-choreographed the power dynamics of the "male gaze" were not originally included in Daphne du Maurier's text. One scene in Hitchcock's film that grounds the "male gaze" and restricts female empowerment is the projector/home movie scene. In the projector scene, Joan Fontaine's character and Maxim are watching a home movie that showcases their honeymoon "happiness". Throughout the home movie scene Maxim (as a surrogate director) operates the projector, controlling the image of himself and Joan Fontaine's character. His ability to control the projector (although the film breaks down) is linked to an overbearing "male gaze" that not only controls the image, but also overcodes the home movie, since he is exhibiting and selecting the footage that will be presented on the screen. Maxim not only projects; he also narrates and

interprets the images. Maxim's main objective in viewing the film is to address how he and Joan Fontaine's character look while on their honeymoon. As Maxim remarks, "Ah, look at you [Joan Fontaine's character]. I want our grandchildren to see how lovely you were" (*Rebecca* 54:34). As he states in this quote, Maxim desires to portray Joan Fontaine's character as a "lovely" housewife to his grandchildren. Maxim's control over the projector can be equated with Joan Fontaine's character's inability to govern her own image in the home movie and how she will be perceived by her grandchildren. On multiple levels, Joan Fontaine's character and spectators viewing the film are re-subjected to the male gaze in the projection scene. The "male gaze" of the projector scene (with Maxim standing and Joan Fontaine sitting in the shadows) subverts Tania Modelski's hypothesis about *Rebecca* which states that the female character is not limited by Hitchcock as a male director. She writes, "In Rebecca the beautiful, desirable woman is not only never sutured in as object of the look, not only never made a part of the film's field of vision, she is actually posited within the diegesis as all-seeking" (52). In this passage, Modelski suggests that Rebecca is never "sutured" by the "look" of the male gaze within the film (ibid). While this may be correct when addressing Rebecca's character it does not account for how Joan Fontaine's character becomes a sexualized object of the male gaze in this scene. The home movie scene shows a female screen image subjected to Maxim's power over the projector which reinforces the male gaze. Joan Fontaine character's screen image being restricted by Maxim's "male gaze" presents a shift in the cinematic experience for both male and female spectators viewing Hitchcock's film. In the scene, Maxim threads or feeds the film into the machine and locks Joan Fontaine's feminine image in the home movie scene to that of a "lovely" housewife both on and off the screen. One could say the turn to a "film within a film" mediated female screen image also signals a change in the cinematic experience for both heterosexual and non-

heterosexual spectators. The scene also introduces a marked change in physical appearance for Joan Fontaine's character. The image of female beauty is split or fragmented in the scene. Joan Fontaine dresses up for the event, appearing in an elegant black gown, as she tries to emulate the deceased Rebecca (imitating and "performing" the modern beauty and fashion styles she sees in a fashion magazine Mrs. Danvers suggestively leaves behind). In her elegant sexy attire, she nervously views images of herself as a plain housewife. In the previous sequence, Joan Fontaine's character expresses the sadness she feels when thinking about the physical features that she lacks and desires, a beauty ideal that is introduced through the constant haunting comparison to Rebecca. As Joan Fontaine's character reveals to Frank Crowley, "They are all comparing me with her…Rebecca… Every day I realize the things that she had that I lacked. Beauty and intelligence and all the things that are important to a woman", she then proceeds to ask, "What is Rebecca really like?" to which Crowley responds, "I suppose that she was the most beautiful creature I ever saw" (*Rebecca* 51:37). In this quote, Fontaine's character describes her desire to obtain the same bodily features as Rebecca in terms of a lack – castrating herself, in a sense, before she "performs" beauty/gender by dressing up for the "screening". It is important to note that the female screen image or footage of Joan Fontaine's more simply dressed character in a rural setting as a honeymooner sharply contrasts with Fontaine's more excessive, flamboyant and bold evening gown look as spectator. Maxim's dismissive comments (dismissing her new outfit – "What have you done to yourself?" and "Do you think that is right for you?") before he quickly changes tone and says "You look lovely" and narration restrict Joan Fontaine's character, subjecting it to an overbearing "male gaze" within the cinematic narrative (*Rebecca* 53:48). One could say that what Fontaine models herself on—Rebecca's imagined haunting elegance and stylized/sexualized magazine-like beauty—is an ideal itself linked to ideal

advertising images and beauty standards reinforced by a patriarchal system – only in the film Rebecca's imagined pin-up image is also endowed with a threatening "intelligence" and filtered through the lesbian look of Mrs. Danvers. Thus, Joan Fontaine's character's own spectatorial desire in the projector scene is caught between two imagined beauty ideals. As Sara Tatyana Bernstein states, "Fontaine's character can only either become the thing she desires, or the version of herself desired/gazed at by her husband Maxim, thus relinquishing her role as active spectator" ("How Alfred Hitchcock's Rebecca Used Fashion to Display the Unseeable", n.p.*).* Fontaine's character's own desire to copy or "perform" Rebecca make her initially more active, but also nervous, as she senses Maxim's distrust. She is all too soon overpowered by the male-controlled flow of images and the film footage or images themselves, like the marriage, break and have to be re-sutured or clipped back together. Fontaine's character perceives her projected screen image and her "plain housewife" past as a limited representation of "beauty and intelligence" which is controlled by the active male gaze of Maxim (ibid). When the conversation turns to gossip, Maxim's dark shadow overpowers Fontaine's character and she desperately screams "Don't look at me like that."

While Joan Fontaine's character's make-over in this scene is done, on the one hand, to appeal to imagined beauty standards inside and outside the cinematic narrative, her husband also celebrates and repairs (in the sense that the film itself breaks down) her younger, more innocent "housewife" image, entrapping her with footage from her past. In terms of narration, he also states "see how lovely you *were"* (my emphasis)! We should note, however, that Joan Fontaine's change in physical appearance could, however, still appeal to heterosexual cinematic spectators who view her through the "male gaze" as a gussied up heterosexual housewife. Yet, if one understands the evening gown look as a moment of feminist subversion or even imitative

hypersexual gender performance, since it deviates strongly from the innocent beauty ideal

Maxim holds onto in this scene (we should recall that Laurence Olivier in another scene states

that he does not want Fontaine to be dressed "in black satin and pearls"), it could also capture the

attention of queer spectators. As indicated above, many film theorists and critics view

Hitchcock's *Rebecca* as a film centred around lesbian desire rather than heterosexual desire[10].

Moreover, these theorists believe that the lesbian desire in *Rebecca* challenges Hitchcock's

directorial authority and his ability to construct a male gaze in order to contain the filmic

narrative. In "Hitchcock and Hom(m)osexuality" (2004), Patricia White posits:

> Leaving questions of rescue, if not of rhetoric, aside, I might describe the
>
> operation of lesbian representability in the Hitchcock text as a kind of
>
> ghost authorship. In other words, lesbian readings remain unauthorized,
>
> yet those that are compelling respond to definite presences, to echoes of an
>
> alternative voice, in the films (218).

Here, White suggests that the ambiguity of lesbian desire in Hitchcock's *Rebecca* allows for a

multiplicity of film readings by spectators. Numerous critics have argued like White that

Rebecca and other classical Hollywood films must be read through the "alternative voice[s]" of

spectators who may have non-heterosexual cinematic desires. Joan Fontaine's character's

growing fear of the "male gaze" in the projection scene ("Do not look at me like that!") may

masochistically reinforce or undermine the patriarchal system. In other words the fluid positions

of non-heterosexual spectators do not subject them to the same "male gaze"; however, they may

also identify with characters who are either submissive or passive in the cinematic narrative. In

"Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", Mulvey posits that "identification" (19) is a thorny

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[10] A few examples of works that explore *Rebecca* as a film about lesbian desire are; Mary Ann Doane's *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (1982), Susan White's "Alfred Hitchcock and Feminist Film Theory (Yet Again)" (2015) and Tania Modleski's *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (1988).

process at work between the spectator and cinematic narrative; however, her psychoanalytic

framework does not allow for more fluid experiences of sexuality and identification.[11] As critics

have noted, non-heterosexual spectators viewing Hitchcock's film may reject Mulvey's theory of

cinematic identification by identifying with Mrs. Danver's lesbian gaze or alternative screen

images[12]. While Hitchcock reintroduces a voyeuristic framework and patriarchal power play in

his carefully orchestrated meta-filmic moment in *Rebecca,* Joan Fontaine's character's make-

over and her cry to stop looking could still appeal to the fluid desires of non-heterosexual

spectators who introduce alternative modes of identifying with cinematic characters[13].

Section 1.3: Introducing the Female Gaze

A critical flaw in Mulvey's spectorial analysis is that she doesn't acknowledge the role of

a female spectator who experiences desire while viewing the male subject as a powerless

character. Although Mulvey tries to nuance this argument in *Death 24X a Second: Stillness and*

Moving Image (2006) and elsewhere, she does not acknowledge an active female gaze as a

separate experience outside of the male gaze. For Mulvey, the female spectator can experience

visual pleasure but is doing so through the male gaze, which determines that pleasure as

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[11] In this thesis, I see identification like Lacan and Mulvey as a difficult process where there is a negotiation or mediation between spectator and the cinematic narrative. In filmic terms, identification may involve a spectator using the lens of their own experiences with race, gender or sexual orientation or their unique personality to map their own desires onto a cinematic character.

[12] The importance of "preestablished sexualities" in cinematic spectatorship will be explored further in the third chapter of this project.

[13] Rhona J. Berenstein's "Adaptation, Censorship, and Audiences of Questionable Type: Lesbian Sightings in 'Rebecca' (1940) and "The Uninvited" (1944) analyzes the marketing strategies of Hitchcock's *Rebecca*, providing another framework for reading lesbianism within the film:

> [marketing strategies] had a secondary, and unintentional, effect on lesbian audiences, as well as on a 'range of women spectators. If Paramount was aware of the lesbian theme of *The Uninvited* (and, indeed, I will later argue the studio was), the film's intended address was to women (lesbian and otherwise) from the start. After all, *Rebecca* is usually discussed as a woman's film, and Paramount went to great pains to draw the link between Hitchcock's movie and its own (21).

As Berenstein notes, Hitchcock's film intentionally remained a story (deriving from Daphne du Maurier's novel) about lesbian desire with the purpose of targeting homosexual and heterosexual audience members.

masochistic. In "Women and Film: A Discussion of Feminist Aesthetics" (1978), Julia Lesage states that there are different viewing experiences that spectators can experience when watching a film. Lesage theorizes that female eroticism and male eroticism present different experiences in viewing a classical Hollywood film. She posits, "Although women's sexuality has been shaped under a dominant patriarchal culture, clearly women do not respond to women in film and the erotic element in quite the same way that men do, given that patriarchal film has the structure of a male fantasy" (89). Here, Lesage suggests that the cinematic experience of women and men may differ, due to their individual erotic desires.

In "Afterthoughts On 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'" (1981), Mulvey begins to address critics' arguments surrounding her notion of female spectators as inherently passive, ensnared by the male gaze in classical Hollywood cinema. Mulvey theorizes that the woman as spectator possesses the ability to identify with the male protagonist, but may "find herself so out of key with the pleasure on offer, with its 'masculinization,' that the spell of fascination is broken[14]. On the other hand, she may not. She may find herself secretly, unconsciously almost, enjoying the freedom of action and control over the diegetic world that identification with a hero provides" (31-32). In this passage, Mulvey returns to her Freudian framework and theorizes that female spectatatorial desire is still linked to the scopophilic desires of the male gaze. Furthermore, Mulvey believes that the male gaze still empowers the male character and this patriarchal framework does not change, even though she acknowledges that it is important to think about female empowerment. It is important to note that Mulvey's theories regarding female

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[14] The concept of "fascination" is an important psychoanalytic term used throughout Mulvey's early essay on the "male gaze." Mulvey's defends her "male gaze" theory by arguing that fascination continues to function amongst spectators and their engagement with cinematic narratives. As she begins her "Visual Pleasure" essay by stating that, "This paper is intended to use psychoanalysis to discover where and how the fascination of film is reinforced by pre-existing patterns of fascination already at work within the individual subject and the social formation that have moulded him" (14). I will return to Mulvey's concept of fascination in later chapters when discussing Black feminist films and LGBTQ+ gazing/looking.

empowerment in "Afterthoughts" is rigid and presupposes a hierarchical structure in cinematic

spectatorship that makes men a necessary requirement for women to achieve authority in their

cinematic viewing. Through this framework, women can achieve their own gaze only by

becoming a 'masculinized' female spectator (ibid). Mulvey's theories regarding the

masculinization of female spectators presents a rigid framework for analyzing cinematic

spectatorship since it does not acknowledge fluid spectatorial positions that are not linked to

male power. I will return to the importance of fluid spectatorship in the third chapter of this

thesis when addressing LGBTQ+ spectatorship.

In "Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator" (1982)*,* Mary Ann

Doane expands on Mulvey's concept of the male gaze and states that a female spectator desires

"to be" the powerful male character in an attempt to escape the patriarchal values in cinematic

narratives (81). She states:

> Thus, while the male is locked into sexual identity, the female can at least
>
> pretend that she is other-in fact, sexual mobility would seem to be a
>
> distinguishing feature of femininity in it cultural construction…The idea
>
> seems to be this: it is understandable that women would want to be men, for
>
> everyone wants to be elsewhere than in the feminine position (ibid).

Although Doane is still restricted by the strict gender binary Mulvey works with, she nuances

this to suggest that femininity and sexual mobility go hand in hand; thus, a female spectator

apriori possesses a more fluid gaze and identificatory power (ibid).

In her famous essay "The Leather Menace" (2011), Gayle Rubin complicates this further

and posits that the human body is open to multiple sexual desires and pleasures. She states,

"sexual diversity exits, not everyone likes to do the same things, and people who have different

sexual preferences are not sick, stupid, warped, brainwashed, under duress, dupes of the patriarchy, products of bourgeois decadence" (133). Rubin suggests that heterosexual societies create divisions between different sexualities and their desires. The hierarchical divisions between sexual desires are thus socially constructed and not natural. Rubin's theory of the human body and sexuality complicates Mulvey's gendering of desire in the male gaze. According to Rubin, all humans have different sexual identities which makes their desires different. Accordingly, Rubin sees Mulvey's initial notion of the male gaze as only providing a one-sided psychoanalytical approach to heterosexual male desire that fails to account for more fluid female desires in cinema. I would agree with Rubin on this point.

Section 1.4: Queering the Cinematic Gaze

In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" Mulvey briefly acknowledges the position of the queer spectator, but only represents homosexual visual pleasure fleetingly in a brief reference to the "buddy genre," an alternative to classic Hollywood cinema ("Visual Pleasure", 20). More specifically, Mulvey suggests that homosexual desires do not "distract" the spectators from the masculine cinematic narrative. Mulvey's psychoanalytic theory of the male gaze implies that the sex or gender of the spectator is inconsequential when it comes to the spectatorial politics of viewing Hollywood narratives. In "Exchanging the Gaze: Re-Visioning Feminist Film Theory" (1985)*,* Gertrud Koch posits that Mulvey's male gaze implies that the spectator's look and the male gaze operate separately from the spectator's gender. As she states: "If…the spectator's look is inscribed in the filmic image in such a way that it is totally controlled, then this would entail a masculinization of the spectator position a priori, independently of the empirical spectator's gender" (143). Mulvey attempts to highlight the significance of homosexuality on screen

regardless of its importance to the spectator's own gender classification. Yet in the passage below (a parenthetical aside in the early essay), Mulvey first references the "buddy movie" to upset her theory of castration and the male gaze, and ends up using the representation of male homosexuality or "buddy" male desire only to return to the "erotic" desires of a male spectator (ibid). She argues in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema":

> (A recent tendency in narrative film has been to dispense with this problem altogether; hence the development of what Molly Haskell has called the 'buddy movie', in which the active homosexual eroticism of the central male figures can carry the story without distraction.) Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium (ibid).

Here, when Mulvey introduces the idea of the "buddy movie" and male homosexual desire she assumes that the male spectators enjoy the visual experience, while the females presumably do not. Importantly, Mulvey's investigation into homosexuality and cinema is only an aside, one that does not address spectators who identify as homosexual. As stated earlier, Mulvey contends that the male gaze is a tool that is overwhelmingly powerful and causes the female subject to be an object for scopophilic pleasure for male viewers. According to Mulvey, the spectator has to associate themselves with the powerful male character on screen. Thus, Mulvey portrays the female spectator as someone who must objectify the female characters shown on screen regardless of whether or not they sexually desire the person on screen. It is as if, according to Mulvey, all women must objectify the women on screen and queer spectators cannot view Hollywood films without identifying as heterosexual.

A major flaw of Mulvey's 1975 essay is that she does not acknowledge different spectatorial positions that do not fit into her rigid heterosexual binary. In "Theorizing Mainstream Female Spectatorship: The Case of the Popular Lesbian Film" (1998), Karen Hollinger critiques Mulvey's notion of the male gaze as inherently masculine and introduces a new framework that accounts for lesbian spectatorship. According to Hollinger, Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasures" theorizes that all spectators must participate in the visual desires of heterosexual men. Hollinger provides an alternative queer perspective on the concept of the gaze, as she contends that the appearance of a lesbian spectator and character in a Hollywood film disrupts the control and power of the masculine cinematic narrative. More importantly, Hollinger suggests that the lesbian's sexual desire for other women conflicts with Mulvey's assertion that the heterosexual man "controls the film's fantasy" through the male gaze ("Visual Pleasure", 20). Hollinger argues:

> The active desire of the coupled lesbian subject is presented through the
>
> lesbian look to the film's female spectator, who is thereby offered
>
> empowerment as an active desiring female subject. In other words, the
>
> lesbian look challenges the exclusive male prerogative to control the filmic
>
> gaze and reconfigures this gaze so that it reflects a new female relation to
>
> desire (12).

Hollinger theorizes that the "lesbian look" dismantles the masculine desires of the male gaze, placing the female spectator in a position of visual power (ibid). According to Hollinger, the lesbian spectator is then able to take control of the masculine "filmic gaze" and assert their own spectatorial desires onto the female character (ibid). The authoritative role of the "lesbian look" over the male gaze shows us that processes of identification and sexual desire taking place

between cinematic images and queer spectators rejects Mulvey's rigid heterosexual binary. In the third chapter I will return to the "lesbian look" in more detail and show how it situates itself as a fluid form of queer spectatorship.

In "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'" (1981), Mulvey addresses criticism surrounding the male gaze and her notions of gendering spectatorial desire. She argues that female and male spectators both partake in the "masculinisation" of spectatorship, which she compares to "trans-sex identification" (35). Nevertheless, Mulvey theorizes that masculine desires and the male gaze still control the spectatorial desire of the audience member regardless of their sex. Although she attempts to nuance her argument, Mulvey in 1981 still connects female spectatorial pleasure to the male gaze and patriarchal conventions. She posits, "desire is given cultural materiality in a text, for women (from childhood onwards) trans-sex identification is a habit that very easily becomes second nature. However, this Nature does not sit easily and shifts restlessly in its borrowed transvestite clothes" (ibid). In this quote, Mulvey suggests that a female's desire to associate with the male gaze is comparable to drag (transvestism), if not cross-gender identification (transgenderism). However, Mulvey's attempt to classify the queer gaze as a form of "trans-sex identification" provides no real insight into different spectatorial positions (ibid). The transgender bodies could/should be associated with a more fluid, shifting sense of gender and sexual identification, but Mulvey's understanding of the spectator here seems rigid. In *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005), Jack Halberstam contends that the transgender body in the cinematic experience operates outside the heteronormative structure of classical Hollywood cinema since it does not present a fixed gender or sexual classification. In his chapter "The Transgender Look" he posits, "The transgender body confirms a fantasy of fluidity so common to notions of transformation within the postmodern. To

others, the transgender body confirms the enduring power of the binary gender system. But to still other viewers, the transgender body represents a utopian vision of a world of subcultural possibilities" (96). Here, Halberstam theorizes that the transgender spectator and character do not participate in the gendering desires of the male gaze because their gender and sexual limits the control of the heteronormative values imposed upon them. In the third chapter of this project, I will examine transgender spectators and characters in more depth by focusing on Halberstam's concept of the "transgender gaze/look".

In order to more fully account for queer spectatorship, I believe that we must turn to Judith Butler's performative gender theory. Judith Butler's concepts of gender performance and performativity are important concepts for understanding how homosexual spectators operate within a heterosexual cinematic experience. More importantly, Butler's queer theories regarding gender identification provide a crucial investigation into the social values that construct masculinity and femininity. In this thesis, Butler's theory of gender as performance will help us analyze the limitations of Mulvey's male gaze and move beyond rigid power structures to postulate shifting, fluid spectator positions.

In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990)*,* Butler contends that gendered acts participate in a desired "fantasy" that heteronormativity reinforces (184). She defines gender as the "disciplinary production of the figures of fantasy through the play of presence and absence on the body's surface" (ibid). In this quote, Butler theorizes that the construction of gender identity in a heteronormative environment leads to performances of masculine or feminine behaviours that are regulated by a fantasy[15]. Through this framework, Butler establishes a concept of gender imitation, which is known as gender performance. Butler

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[15] The concept of "fantasy" is an important psychological term that will be explored further in the third chapter when I analyze the un-hinged gendered position of the "transgender gaze/look".

posits that in gender performance an individual is consciously aware of themselves re-enacting a certain gender. More specifically, the individual is partaking in a role of the gender that they are attempting to copy. In comparison, Butler defines her concept of gender performativity as a person unconsciously repeating heteronormative gender behaviours. A person exhibits gender performativity, by continuously repeating the same actions so often that it becomes unconscious. Butler's concept of gender performativity can be read against Mulvey's gendering of spectatorial desire in classical Hollywood film. The classical cinematic narrative works to reinscribe and continue imitative "masculine" and "feminine" traits in spectators through a patriarchal lens. Classical Hollywood narratives may project their ideal depictions of femininity or masculinity; however, Mulvey's psychoanalytic framework assumes that all spectators either assume the role as the powerful man or the submissive woman (even if it is a woman who enjoys playing submissive or wearing male clothes- which she defines as the transvestite spectator). Mulvey's understanding of the cinematic spectator and Butler's notion of gendered body are both concerned with an individual's unconscious decision to surrender themselves to societal conventions. In addition, Mulvey suggests that both male and female spectators participate in the male gaze by identifying with the male protagonist on the screen. Spectators surrender themselves to the male gaze, which controls their experience and visual perception of the film. Butler similarly theorizes that people who unconsciously imitate masculine or feminine traits that are socially inscribed invite others to control their gendering. She thus contends that individuals surrender their bodies to perform masculine and feminine actions and to conform to heterosexual values. In *Gender Trouble,* Butler posits:

> In the place of the law of heterosexual coherence, we see sex and gender
>
> denaturalized by means of performance which avows their distinctness and

> dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated reality…the original
>
> identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin.
>
> To be more precise, it is a production which, in effect-that is, in its effect-
>
> postures an imitation (187-188).

In this quote, Butler theorizes that gender performance demonstrates how masculine and feminine behaviours are actually unnatural and are "cultural mechanisms" of heteronormative cultures (ibid). Mulvey's concept of the male gaze reinforces the rigid binary of the cultural mechanism Butler describes, assuming that spectatorial desire is inherently heterosexual. According to Mulvey's male gaze theory, a heterosexual male will inherently associate with the straight male protagonist since they both desire the female character ("Visual Pleasure", 19). In comparison, Butler's work "Critically Queer" (1993) theorizes that there is no fixed gender characteristics since society has constructed the definitions of masculinity and femininity. She contends, "The distinction between the 'inside' truth of femininity, considered a psychic disposition or ego-core, and the 'outside' truth, considered as appearance or presentation, produces a contradictory formation of gender in which no fixed truth can be established" (24). Here, Butler infers that gender classifications among children can be problematic because society negatively impacts the internalization of gender identity by enforcing masculine and feminine behaviours.

In this thesis, I am inspired by Butler's concept of gender performativity, which allows for a closer analysis of other spectatorial positions in film culture[16]. In the third chapter I will

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[16] While Butler's performative theory is important to this project it is important to address its limitations, as I will discuss in more depth in the third chapter. One critique of Butler's performative theory is discussed in Dennis Schep's "The Limits of Performativity: A Critique of Hegemony in Gender Theory" (2012). In his work, Dennis Schep notes that Butler's performativity theory does not take into consideration people who construct their gender identities freely and do not conform to societal regulations. Schep posits: "In functioning as a seal confirming the final truth of a given identity rather than merely one way among others to make sense of it, performativity translates this identity into terms that are not its own, understanding being as *such* rather than allowing it to manifest itself as

examine the lesbian look and the transgender gaze/look in more depth, as two gazes/looks which

place the spectator outside the heteronormative and cisnormative framework of patriarchal

culture. I believe that further investigation is needed to more fully theorize the fluidity of the

gaze/look for queer spectators. The lesbian spectator and transgender character's fluid gaze/look

is important in understanding how non-heteronormative and non-cisnormative spectators are able

to disassociate themselves from the male gaze when viewing heteronormative mainstream film.

Mulvey's feminist film theory and understanding of the male gaze and spectatorial desire

are important in discussing how classical Hollywood cinema shows its spectators false

representations of masculinity and femininity. Furthermore, Mulvey's methodology in "Visual

Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" could be beneficial since it underlines how the male gaze

reinforces patriarchal norms that govern the production of cinematic narratives and limit female

agency. In concluding this chapter, it is also important to note that since the essay was published

many contemporary theorists who would otherwise dismiss Mulvey's essay felt compelled to

return to it both in classrooms and in individual research in order to understand how patriarchy

shapes classical Hollywood narratives. The collection of articles on "Visual Pleasure" published

in a Mulvey dossier on *The Chronical of Higher Education* are important to address, since they

highlight different contemporary thoughts on Mulvey's essay. For example, Sharon Marcus'

article "A Richer, Stranger Essay" (2015), like my project, addresses the essay's limitations (its

failure to complicate spectatorial identification and desire). However, Marcus posits that

Mulvey's essay should not be ignored since it provides a solid framework for understanding the

inequality between men and women as cinematic spectators. She contends:

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being, and in doing so, it may be seen to delegitimate the identities of those who do not accept its fundamental
terms" (877-878).

40 years later, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" still resonates with

students, and still resonates with me. Men and women remain unequal in

their relationship to vision, visibility, and action. Reductive models of

sexual difference continue to relegate the amazing variety of what people

actually do, think, and feel to the shadowy realm of the exception…The

essay's limitations are real, but they also reflect real limitations; four

decades later, we cannot celebrate the essay's anniversary by declaring it

an artifact of a distant, bygone era…. I think you will find, as I did, that

just as lived experiences of masculinity and femininity are much weirder

than the Hollywood versions, so too is this subtle essay richer and stranger

than the image we have made of it (Marcus, n.p.).

I agree with Marcus' point. Although Mulvey's essay is limited in pointing to/theorizing other

kinds of spectatorship: female, queer, or racialized, the essay itself is a rich nodal point for

generating new ideas about our relationship to the screen. On the one hand, Mulvey's

psychoanalytic work and analysis of the male gaze is one-dimensional as it only critiques cinema

through the lens of heteronormativity and focuses on the power of the male spectator. On the

other hand, however, Mulvey herself gestures towards the importance of theorizing a new

"language of desire" although her own framework does not provide enough information

regarding spectators who experience different spectatorial desires outside the restrictive

parameters of heteronormativity ("Visual Pleasure", 16). In the chapters to come, I will turn to

other theorists to argue that Hollywood films and contemporary experimental films allowed for

the pleasure of different genders and sexualities which has resulted in different cinematic

experiences and fluid gazes that operate outside Mulvey's notion of the male gaze[17]. In order to more fully account for these fluid spectatorial positions, the next chapter will highlight the importance of bell hooks' term the "oppositional gaze" to understand how Black female spectators are able to take on a new un-anchored and self-critical form of looking relations that removes themselves from sexist and racist cinematic conventions. After looking more closely at the critical modes of identification and gazing that bell hooks introduces in her writing on the "oppositional gaze" we can return, in the final chapter, to the queer gaze as paradigmatic of a new fluid spectator position that moves beyond the limited male gaze first theorized in Mulvey's rigid gender framework. It is important to acknowledge that Mulvey's early theories have been influential and have opened the door to new kinds of inquiry and new strands of psychoanalytic film theory. However, a different kind of analysis is needed that would account for a wider spectrum of spectators and diverse encounters with cinematic images in Hollywood narratives.

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[17] In *Savage Theory: Cinema as Modern Magic* (1999)*,* Rachel Moore returns to an early "impressionist" French film theorist Jean Epstein to refer to a "point of view" in the cinema that is not wedded to the camera or point of view shot, which is known as "the independent eye" (94). She posits:

> Such independent filmmaking gives full value to what Epstein termed 'the independent eye' in his critique of the point-of-view shot: "But I do not mean to imply, as it was recently the fashion to state, that each image of the film should be conceived as seen by one of the characters in a preceding shot. Subjectivism like this is overdone. Why refuse to profit by one of the rarest qualities of the cinematic eye, that of *being an eye independent of the eye, of escaping the tyrannical egocentricism of our personal vision?* Why compel the sensitive emulision simply to duplicate the functions of our own retina? Why not grasp eagerly at an almost unique opportunity to set a scene from a focus other than our own line of sight? The lens is itself (ibid).

Epstein's "independent eye" is important to address in order to show how the cinematic camera lens possesses its own "subjectivity" (ibid). By understanding the camera gaze as independent we can work toward a broader definition of the cinematic gaze, making space for the co-existence of different spectatorial perspectives in the filmic experience.

Chapter 2: The Oppositional Gaze: Other-Critical Forms of "Gazing" in Black Cinematic Spectatorship

The 'universe' that blacks have found themselves flung into is an antiblack racist and white supremacist universe, which is to say it is not a world of their own creation and social construction… All their relations, even with themselves and other blacks, are- well, we could ironically say- "blackened", they are hyper-racially colonized and clouded by antiblack racism and white supremacy" (54).

Reiland Rabaka, *Forms of Fanonism: Frantz Fanon's Critical Theory and the Dialectics of Decolonization* (2010).

Section 2.1: Introduction: Black Spectatorship and bell hooks' "The Oppositional Gaze":

In the guest editor's introduction to *Visual Culture and Race* (2014), Shawn Michelle Smith states that race in gaze theory needs to be understood as a "subjective status produced by the *performance* of gaze (rather than the performance *for* a gaze)" (3). Thus, a Black spectator gazing at their racialized bodies through an internalized white perspective (i.e. an internalized anti-Black racist perspective) is inherently performative. Adopting this framework of the psychoanalytic notion of the gaze, Black film theorists have sought to understand how white gazing can alter Black spectatorship and their engagement with cinematic narratives. As outlined in the first chapter, Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) provides a psychoanalytic gaze theory that only accounts for heterosexual and cisgender spectators and does not address Black spectatorship. Mulvey in her early essay fails to account for how Black male and female spectators engage with racialized screen images. In order to arrive at an intersectional fluid/free understanding of cinematic gazing/looking in this thesis, in this chapter we turn to the question of how Black spectators reshape cinematic narratives.

In 1992, African American film theorist bell hooks published her ground-breaking essay "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" which, taking up Mulvey's film theory in a

critical fashion, conceptualized a new other-critical form of cinematic gazing called "oppositional gazing" that Black women spectators could partake in order to critically assess inadequate representations of whiteness and Blackness on screen (118). According to hooks, oppositional gazing allows Black women spectators to look at cinematic images of both whiteness and Blackness and maintain a critical distance. In her essay on the oppositional gaze, hooks critiques Laura Mulvey's inherently white-privileged "gaze theory," stating that it ignores sexualized images of Black women in film (117). I would even extend hooks' argument to argue that Mulvey's gaze theory privileges a spectatorial politics that is driven by "likeness and recognition" (17), not difference. Mulvey describes spectatorship itself as fascination driven by recognition, being fascinated by an image's similarities to our own human bodies. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) Mulvey posits:

> The conventions of mainstream film focus attention on the human form. Scale, space, stories are all anthropomorphic. Here, curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world (17& 18).

But what bodies? What images? Mulvey notes that all spectators identify with visual images through a process of recognition. But what if this process of recognition is linked to the problematic classical Hollywood process of privileging all-white likeness on screen?

Thirteen years after the appearance of Mulvey's essay on the "male gaze", Malian writer, filmmaker, cultural theorist, and art historian Manthia Diawara pointed out that Mulvey's influential essay was, in a very important sense, "colour-blind," since it looked at spectatorship

primarily through the lens of gender, not race.[18] Diawara provocatively noted that Mulvey failed

to provide a framework for thinking about "the historical specificity" of black male spectator

experiences or other audience members who may historically have questioned or resisted the

power play programmed into Hollywood images. Diawara, in his seminal essay "Black

Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance" published in *Screen* magazine's last

"special" issue on race, dialogues in fascinating ways with Mulvey's own essay, while also

arguing for a new, critical gaze, powerfully stating that there are spectators, both white and

black, who denounce the "racial representations of dominant cinema" (66).[19] Diawara

appropriates Mulvey's feminist criticism, when analyzing the re-inscription of the "castrated"

black male in contemporary Hollywood films, with a twist: "As a *black* male spectator, I wish to

argue, in addition, that the dominant cinema situates black characters primarily for the pleasure

of white spectators (male or female) (70-71; his emphasis)." The Black cultural theorist and

filmmaker importantly reassesses spectatorship through the lens of difference, suggesting "that

the components of 'difference' among elements of race, gender and sexuality give rise to

different readings of the same material" (67). Ultimately Diawara set the stage for bell hooks'

own theory of the oppositional gaze, by embracing a more active "resisting spectatorship (67), a

"spectatorial resistance to Hollywood's figuration of blacks" (76). Like hooks, Diawara

concludes that "One of the roles of black independent cinema, therefore, must be to increase

spectator awareness of the impossibility of an uncritical acceptance of Hollywood products

(76)."

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[18] Other influential scholarship on black spectatorship includes James Snead's *White Screens/Black Images*: *Hollywood From the Dark Side (*Routledge, 1994) and Anna Everett's *Returning the Gaze: A Genealogy of Black Film Criticism, 1909-1949* (Duke University Press, 2001).

[19] Like Mulvey, Diawara calls for a new "active criticism" that would go hand in hand with "contemporary oppositional filmmaking" or a counter-cinema. However, unlike Mulvey, who does not specifically address or acknowledge spectatorial resistance to racist ideology on screen, Diawara analyzes the racist ideology in Griffith's 1915 *The Birth of a Nation* in-depth.

In the same special issue of *Screen*, queer black British filmmaker Isaac Julien and British art historian Kobena Mercer, who also identifies both as mixed-race and gay, argue that certain categories of spectator simply do not have "access" to what Mulvey had thought of as the "initial moment of recognition" (9). Julien and Mercer argue, like Jane Gaines, that feminist film theory unwittingly reproduces "gender binarisms implicit in the heterosexist presumptions" (8) Like Diawara, these critics note that "feminist film theory remains 'colour blind' to the racial hierarchies that structure master over the 'look (8)'".[20]

If Diawara, Mercer and Julien pointed out that Mulvey's account of the gaze does not acknowledge the unique historical experiences of Black spectators,[21] Hooks in the 90s pushed this one step further, critiquing the identificatory process analyzed by Mulvey by drawing attention to the different spectatorial gazes that could be tied to Black male and female spectators. According to hooks, Black male spectators are able to possess an "imaginative" patriarchal gaze in their viewing experience which causes them to look at cinematic images differently to Black women. According to hooks, Black men are thus able to partake in **a** "phallocentric politics of spectatorship" which allow**s** them to identify with the dominant male protagonist and desire the submissive Black or white female protagonist in a patriarchal cinematic narrative (118). As hooks states:

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[20] It is also important to note that Julien's multi-screen installation pieces use a "distracted" digital gaze and kaleidoscopic spectatorial experiences, disparate imagery and fragmented narratives to unsettle stereotypes and offer a new perspective on social issues, race and gender. Mulvey has analyzed and praised this kaleidoscopic gaze used in Julien's multiscreen installation *The Thousand Waves* in *Afterimages: On Cinema, Women and Changing Times* (2019).

[21] Mulvey has recently responded to the absence of African American spectators in her early essay on the "male gaze" in her most recent work *Afterimages: On Cinema, Women and Changing Times* (2019). As she states:

> Although I was reasonably aware of American history and culture and had a definite interest in African American literature and music, it was some time before I began to realize that the whiteness of Hollywood screen was due to a conscious implementation of racist policies in the film industry. The structure of the gaze around gender, however, was obvious to me and could be conceptualized psychoanalytically. To address the question of racism would have demanded a much more historically informed and serious argument (243).

What Mulvey does not address here is the possibility of examining other alternative looking positions (critical or not) that could be understood through the intersection of both gender and race.

As spectators, black men could repudiate the reproduction of racism in

cinema and television, the negation of black presence, even as they could feel

as though they were rebelling against white supremacy by daring to look, by

engaging phallocentric politics of spectatorship…the black male gaze was

always subject to control and/or punishment by the powerful white Other, the

private realm of television screens or dark theaters could unleash the

repressed gaze (ibid).

Hooks contends that Black men are able to escape the white Other's gaze in the filmic

experience by occupying a "phallocentric gaze" (ibid). The Black male's identification with the

"phallocentric gaze" allows him to adopt a Mulveyian male gaze that is governed by an

"imaginative phallocentric power" (ibid). In this approach, hooks theorizes that the identity of

the hypothetical Black male viewer is based on a prior identification with patriarchy that

transcends racial distinctions. The patriarchy in which the Black man lives and gazes with is

interlaced, as hooks argues, with white supremacy. This causes the Black man's prior

identification to not only be patriarchal (subscribing to generalized maleness) but also whitened,

which is also known as "lactification", a term established by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White*

Masks (80). I will examine Fanon's concept of lactification in more depth in the next section of

this chapter.

In her essay, hooks also notes that Black women spectators are unable to escape the white

gaze through a masculinized gaze (male gaze). Instead, they must use a new oppositional gaze in

order to reject sexist and racist screen-images (122). Through an oppositional gaze, Black

women spectators are able to construct their own cinematic viewing of racist films by critically

assessing the filmic depictions of Black identities. Empowered by an oppositional gaze, Black

women spectators do not identify with nor completely ignore a Black women's screen image;

rather they look at it through a politically informed lens which allows them to dissect the sexist

and racial stereotypes that it portrays. A Black woman's ability to understand the racial issues

associated with filmic images allows her to step outside the narrative perspective, limiting her

identification (or limiting the "fascinating" power of the cinematic identification-process) with

characters in the film. Thus, hooks' understanding of an oppositional gaze infers that there is a

doubleness in the Black woman spectator's perception of screen images. The Black woman

spectator views the cinematic narrative and visualizes both a racist screen image and a racialized

subject on screen. According to hooks, the Black women's oppositional gaze identifies "neither

with the phallocentric gaze nor the construction of white womanhood as lack," but instead finds

"visual delight in the pleasure of interrogation" (126). By critically gazing, Black female

spectators can also understand how eroticized filmic images of white and Black women are

created for a phallocentric gaze (ibid)[22]. Furthermore, an oppositional gaze allows Black female

spectators to reject Mulvey's male gaze theory entirely by dismantling patriarchal cinematic

conventions that position women as the "bearer of the look" ("Visual Pleasures", 20). By

critically understanding the structure of the phallocentric gaze, Black women are able to critique

the ideological imperative in classical narrative cinema that works to control spectatorial desires.

As hooks states, "Black female spectators, who refused to identify with white womanhood, who

would not take on the phallocentric gaze of desire and possession, created a critical space where

the binary opposition Mulvey uses 'woman as image, man as bearer of the look' was continually

deconstructed" (122-123). This refusal to identify with white/anti-Black filmic images allows

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[22] I discuss the oppositional gaze and the rejection of the "eroticized" Black female screen image in more detail in the third section of this chapter.

Black women spectators to use an oppositional gaze to critique racist and sexist cinematic images.

However, on what basis are Black women able to "refuse" the identification with the white woman's screen image that the film offers them? In psychoanalytic terms, the refusal on the part of the Black woman spectator is due to a prior identification with Black women which is stronger than the fascinating identification that the white woman's screen image offers them. Mulvey's male gaze theory in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) itself, from this perspective, fragments a women's film-viewing experience, divorcing it from her prior life and own experiences with sex and gender, race and class. As I noted in the first chapter, Mulvey's essay on the male gaze suggests that classical Hollywood cinema merely reaffirms or augments the spectator's prior identification. In Freudian terms, Mulvey suggests that heterosexual (presumably white) men go into a movie already investing their ego-libido (desire to identify) in the images of other heterosexual men and their object-libido (sexual desire) in the images of heterosexual women ("Visual Pleasure", 19). Women, on the other hand, always invest their ego-libido in the images of other heterosexual women and their object-libido in the images of heterosexual men (ibid). In this sense, narrative film participates in the reproduction of the conditions and relations of patriarchy, white supremacy, heteronormativity and cisnormativity[23]. However, don't women have other experiences? The oppositional Black female spectator's prior identification is certainly not supported by the white cinematic narrative since she does not use her ego-libido and object-libido to desire a white or racialized Black woman on screen. Rather, the Black woman's own prior experiences and Black identity empowers her to use an

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[23] In the third chapter of this project I provide a Butlerian critique on the "reproduction" of heteronormative and cisnormative cinematic conventions.

oppositional gaze to look past sexual identification and instead critically identify with the cinematic narrative. As hooks posits:

> Spaces of agency exist for black people, wherein we can both interrogate the gaze of the Other but also look back, and at one another, naming what we see. The "gaze" has been and is a site of resistance for colonized black people globally. Subordinates in relations of power learn experientially that there is a critical gaze, one that "looks" to document, one that is oppositional. In resistance struggle, the power of the dominated to assert agency by claiming and cultivating "aware-ness" politicizes "looking" relations- one learns to look a certain way in order to resist (116).

As hooks notes, a Black woman's oppositional gaze is not sexually **"fascinated"** by filmic images; rather it works to "document" and "resist" white supremacist and sexist cinematic narratives (ibid). I will return to the Black woman spectator's ego-libido and object-libido in the fourth section of this chapter.

In order to further critique the limitations of Mulvey's theory of the gendered gaze, this chapter of my thesis tries to mobile a number of theorists who critically examine the viewing experiences of Black spectators. By prioritizing the need for racial intervention in Mulvey's cinematic gaze theory, I argue that Black spectators can take up alternative looking positions that engage, in multiple ways, with images of whiteness and blackness on screen. Hooks' feminist stance on racialized and gendered gazing, as already discussed, provides an effective model to critique Mulvey's theory of the male gaze. As noted above, hooks' chapter "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" (1992) underscores how gender classifications used in Mulvey's essay should not be the only social categories we use when assessing visual pleasure. In order to

better understand the construction of Black subjectivity, visual pleasure and how white gazing could restrict a Black spectator's ability to gaze and/or look freely, the next section of this chapter will investigate Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1943). I turn to Fanon and Sartre's psychoanalytic and phenomenological works in order to further understand how racialized gazing, which can exist in film and outside film, is socially constructed by **a** white Other. While Fanon and Sartre do not explicitly explore issues of patriarchal gazing they nevertheless underscore how anti-Black racism that the white gaze perpetuates stems from a white person's own insecurities with their own body. Through Fanon and Sartre's works I argue that the white gaze aggresses against the Black body in order to disavow their own bodily insecurities. Like hooks, Fanon also argues that there is a "doubleness" that defines the Black spectator experience and this "doubled" spectatorial experience also merits further discussion.

Section 2.2: Understanding Fanonian Psychoanalysis to Combat the "White Gaze":

Frantz Fanon's work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) is a theoretical text that employs psychoanalysis to uncover the effects of racism on Black identities during the events of colonial domination. In his work, Fanon uses personal and historical experiences of racism to analyze the power that colonialism has on the everyday lives and experiences of Black people[24]. Fanon's

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[24] While Fanon's work is an important socio-psychological work that effectively analyzes issues pertaining to colonialism, it does not attempt to address Black women's subjectivity. Gwen Bergner's "Who is that Masked Woman? Or, the Role of Gender in Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks" (1952) is one of many critical works that explores Fanon's exclusion of Black femininity. Bergner states that Fanon only provides a psychoanalytic analysis of Black "masculinity" (77). She posits, "In *Black Skin, White Masks,* women are considered as subjects almost exclusively in terms of their sexual relationships with men; feminine desire is thus defined as an overly literal and limited (hetero)sexuality…while it is not surprising that Fanon, writing in the early fifties, takes the masculine as the norm, it is necessary not only to posit alternative representations of femininity but also to consider how his account of normative race masculinity depends on the production or exclusion of femininities" (ibid). I would

project focuses on how Black subjects perceive themselves and how they construct their

identities through racist values instilled by white cultures. More importantly, Fanon theorizes

that colonialism reinforces white societal values in the Black subject's psyche, resulting in a

false sense of inferiority in their impossible desire to achieve "whiteness". While Fanon's work

does not explicitly focus on racism in cinema, he does briefly meditate on this and his

philosophy is still important to acknowledge in this project since it outlines a psychoanalytic

model that shows how Black people construct their identities around white gazes. As I briefly

mentioned in the first section, we can turn to Fanon's psychoanalytic study of Black subjectivity

to further investigate how the production of racist screen images stem from a white person's fear

of their own biology and animality. In a footnote, Fanon references Lacan's mirror stage theory

and posits that a white person constructs an "imaginary aggression with the appearance of the

black man" (139). Thus, the white man's fear of a Black person derives from their inability to

properly identify with the Black person's body (139). Fanon further states, "For the white man,

however, 'the Other' is perceived as a bodily image, absolutely as the non ego., the

unidentifiable, the unassimilable. For the black man we have demonstrated that the historical and

economic realities must be taken into account" (ibid). Here, Fanon notes that the white man's

gaze focuses on a Black person's body as an unreadable image, while the Black man's gaze

looks at the white man's body as a "historical and economic" image (ibid). Thus, it is important

to psychologically understand how the anxiety of the white man and his gaze could negatively

impact Black subjectivity.

     In "Remembering Fanon" (1987), Homi Bhabha contends that the process of white or

Black people identifying with a racialized image can never manifest physically because these

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agree with Bergner in seeing Fanon's work as inherently "masculine". However, Fanon's psychoanalytic model
for investigating racialized gazing can be applied to both men and women in film.

images are socially constructed and only exist within the psyche of a person. Furthermore, Bhabha theorizes that a Black person's "image of [white] identification" is always split since it represents something that is both "present" and "absent" in their psyche (120). As he states:

> For identification, identity is never *a priori,* nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an 'image' of totality. The discursive conditions of this psychic image of identification will be clarified if we think of the perilous perspective of the concept of the image itself. For the image- as point of identification- marks the site of ambivalence. Its representation is always spatially split- it makes *present* something that is *absent*- and temporally deferred- it is the representation of a time that is always elsewhere, a repetition. The image is only ever an *appurtenance* to authority and identity; it must never be read mimetically as the 'appearance' of reality' (120).

Bhabha's notion on the "splitting" of the "image of identification" is comparable to Lacan's theory of the scopic register found in his work "What is a Picture?" (1981). In "What is a Picture?", Lacan argues that the gaze causes a split between the subject and the psychological image on screen. The psychological image in the gaze extracts the image of the person from the person. As Lacan posits:

> I must, to begin with, insist on the following: in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture. This is the function that is found at the heart of the institution of the subject in the visible. What determines me, at the most profound level, in the visible, is the gaze that is outside. It is through the gaze that I enter light and it is from the gaze that I

receive its effects. Hence it comes about that the gaze is the instrument

through which light is embodied and through which- if you will allow me to

use the word, as I often do, in a fragmented form- I am *photo-graphed*"

(106).

This is comparable to Bhabha's position, since both theorists note that an external visual and

psychological image shapes the way someone constructions their identity. For Bhabha racial

discrimination stems from "authority and identity", meaning that anti-Black or whitened

cinematic images of Black people cannot exist without what hooks call a "white supremacist

society" that authors and inscribes such images. Bhabha further states, "The image is at once a

metaphoric substitution an illusion of presence and by that same token a metonym, a sign of its

absence and loss" (ibid). Here, Bhabha notes that the whitened "psychic image" is only an

illusion that derives from the white gaze. This "psychic image" of white superiority in the white

gaze can influence the way a Black person constructs their identity. In filmic terms, anti-Black

and/or whitened screen images stem from what Fanon calls the "white world" which causes

Black people (in this case, cinematic spectators) to construct their psychic image of their own

Blackness as "Other" to white people (90).

Perpetually tasked with constructing images of their own Blackness as "Other" is a

dizzying operation that again splits the spectator, creating an instability that infinitely fractures

and frustrates black subjectivity. In his chapter "The Lived Experience of the Black Man"

(1952), Fanon briefly discusses how his own perception of racial difference on and off screen

impacts his cinematic experience. He states, "I can't go to the movies without encountering

myself. I wait for myself. Just before the film starts, I wait for myself. Those in front of me look

at me, spy on me, wait for me. A black bellhop is going to appear. My aching heart makes my

head spin" (119). Fanon describes a vertigo of identification, similar in some ways to what hooks

describes a "doubling" of African American female spectatorship. However, where hooks

describes the "doubleness" of the cinematic spectatorship experience as part of a critical gazing

that ultimately empowers the spectator and creates critical distance, Fanon describes a dizzying

doubling that fractures and fragments black subjectivity. Fanon in the film theatre is both a

racially oppressed black screen subject or character and a black spectator with an "aching heart".

He is forced to identify with the racialized subject on screen, but in an uncanny split he himself

is "screened" in the theatre, haunted by a heightened awareness of the white audience, who

objectify and spy on his own image. In another passage, Fanon elaborates further on his

filmgoing experiences and this vertiginous split and over-identification, when the Black

spectator is fearfully forced to merge with the racialized screen image, which leads to

negrophobia. In a footnote in his chapter "The Black Man and Psychopathology", Fanon

problematizes the vertigo of black spectatorship and the role film plays as part of a larger

network of information and visual messages that shape a "community's vision of the world"

(131). Fanon invites the reader/spectator to relive two screenings a Tarzan film, one in the

Antilles (colonies) and one in France (a colonial metropole/European theatre):

> Attend showings of a Tarzan film in the Antilles and in Europe. In the Antilles, the young
>
> Negro identifies himself de facto with Tarzan against the Negroes. This is much more
>
> difficult for him in a European theater, for the rest of the audience, which is white,
>
> automatically identifies him with the savages on screen. It is a conclusive experience.
>
> The Negro learns that one is not black without problems. A documentary film on Africa
>
> produces similar reactions when it is shown in a French city and in Fort-de-France. I will
>
> go farther and say that Bushmen and Zulus arouse even more laughter among the young

Antilleans. It would be interesting to show how in this instance the reactional

exaggeration betrays a hint of recognition. In France a Negro who sees this documentary

is virtually petrified. There he has no more hope of flight: He is at once Antillean,

Bushman, and Zulu (152–53).

In the colonies the black spectator identifies as white, identifies as Tarzan *against* the black

characters on screen, creating an imaginative likeness to Tarzan (although this involves

comically objectifying the black screen image). In French cinemas, however, it is no longer

possible for the black spectator to take part of this colonial comedy or the visual pleasures of

identification. The negrophobia is intensified. The black spectator is anchorless, fractured in the

film theatre "at once Antillean (white-identifying), Bushman, and Zulu (153, my clarification)."

As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam powerfully write in their reading of this passage, "Fanon's

example points to the shifting, situational nature of colonized spectatorship: the colonial context

of reception alters the process of identification. The awareness of the possible negative

projections of other spectators triggers an anxious withdraw from the film's programmed

pleasures (348)." In the Antilles or French colonies, again the black spectator identifies with the

white hero Tarzan against the other black characters on screen … however, as Stam points out in

the second screening subjected to a colonial gaze in the European theatre "the conventional self-

denying identification with the white hero's gaze, the vicarious acting out of a European

selfhood, is short-circuited through the awareness of a 'screened' or 'allegorized' colonial gaze

within the movie theatre itself" (348). Stam draws a parallel to Mulvey's "to-be-looked-at-ness"

of the female representations or characters on screen, arguing, however that what "Fanon calls

attention to" is nothing other than "the 'to-be-looked-at-ness of spectators themselves, who

become slaves (…) of their own appearance" (348).

In "Resistance through Re-Narration: Fanon on De-Constructing Racialized Subjectivities" (2011), Cynthia R. Nielsen notes that in Fanon's postcolonial theory, the white gaze causes Black subjects to first negatively reconstruct their perceptions of their Black subjectivity. This causes the Black subject to internalize anti-Black mythology and vertiginously experience objectification and racism in the white gaze[25]. Nielsen posits: "The black person is thrown into this narrative with his part rigidly scripted and his subjectivity constructed according to the dominant culture's interpretation of his 'essence' and history" (367). Nielsen and Fanon suggest that Black subjects feel objectified due to the false narratives surrounding Blackness that are constructed by the "dominant culture" of the white Other (ibid). However, as Nielsen argues, ultimately Fanon holds out hope for the possibility of using "decolonization" to "deconstruct colonial narratives," thus "re-narrating new, positive identities and concepts of blackness" (371).

Fanon argues that Black people do not inherently perceive their Blackness as negative until the white "Other" gazes at them and reinforces racist values onto their bodies. As he states:

> The study of language [is] essential for providing us with one element in understanding the black man's dimension of being-for-others it being understood that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other. The black man possesses two dimensions: one with his fellow blacks, the other with the Whites (1).

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[25] Fanon's notion of gazing initiating racial difference amongst Black and white people is comparable to Freudian theories regarding the construction of gender formation. In *From the History of Infantile Neurosis* (1918), Freud contends that "primal scenes" are sexual acts between mother and father that cause the child to have a visual crisis in which they recognize the physical differences in their parent's reproductive organs. The boy will see his mother's genitals and acknowledge that she is lacking a phallus (5). Thus, Freudian subject formation relies on the act of sight to determine sexual difference which is similar to a Black person experiencing instability in their racial identity in the white gaze. It is the white gaze that causes the Black person to split their identity into two parts; one formed by white ideals and the other through their personal experiences.

As Fanon notes, the Black subject participates in the role of "being-for-others" only when there is the presence of the gaze from a white subject. Thus, the gaze of the white subject causes Black people to split their identity into parts and partake in a performative and objectified role[26].

It is important to note that Fanon's notion of "being-for-others" is not just a phenomenon of the senses of sight but also "language" (1). According Fanon, white and Black people ascribe to the role of "being-for-others" when they combine racialized gazing with colonial language[27]. According to Fanon, the white person uses colonial language and their white gaze to cover up inferiority and gain a false sense of racial superiority over a Black person. However, the racist values that inform the white person's gaze cannot exist without colonial language. Fanon states:

> To speak gobbledygook to a black man is insulting, for it means he is a
>
> gook. Yet, we'll be told, there is no intention to willfully give offense. OK,
>
> but it is precisely this absence of will- this offhand manner; this
>
> casualness; and the ease with which they classify him, imprison him at an
>
> uncivilized and primitive level- that is insulting. If the person who speaks
>
> to a man of color of an Arab in pidgin does not see that there is a flaw or a
>
> defect in his behavior, then he has never paused to reflect (15).

As Fanon notes, a Black person can appropriate colonial language (a being-for-other role) in an attempt to become "whiter" (Fanon, 2). As Fanon posits:

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[26] It is important to acknowledge that Fanon does not agree with Sartre's theory of "being-for-others" noting that it is limited in its theoretical understanding of Black consciousness (117). The purpose of including Sartre in this section is because Fanon's work is still heavily influenced by him. As Fanon states in a footnote, "Though Sartre's speculations on the existence of "the Other" remain correct (insofar as, we may recall, *Being and Nothingness* describes an alienated consciousness), their application to a black consciousness proves fallacious because the white man is not only "the Other" but also the master, whether real or imaginary" (ibid). I agree with Fanon's critique of Sartre, however I believe that both theorists' definitions of "being-for-others" are crucial to understanding racialized gazing in cinema.

[27] Fanon's notion of sight and language in "being-for-others" is comparable to Lacan's psychoanalytic mirror stage theory which upholds the orders of the Imaginary (gaze) and the Symbolic (language) but also suggests their overlap and entanglement.

To speak a language is to appropriate its world and culture. The Antillean

who wants to be white will succeed, since he will have adopted the cultural

tool of language…It should be understood that historically the black man

wants to speak French, since it is the key to open doors which only fifty

years ago still remained close to him. The Antillean who falls within our

description goes out of his way to seek the subtleties and rarities of the

language- a way of proving to himself that is culturally adequate (21).

Here, Fanon theorizes that a Black man can be consciously aware of his use of colonial

language. The Black person, according to Fanon, understands the racial connotations given to

certain words in colonial language. However, the Black person wants to use colonial language in

order to "prove to himself that [he] is culturally adequate" (ibid).

To compare, Jean-Paul Sartre defines "being-for-others" in *Being and Nothingness*

(1943) as the action of a person consciously perceiving themselves from the point of view of

another. Sartre's concept of "being-for-others" implies that human consciousness and the body

constitute one another. According to Sartre, all humans surrender themselves to the Other's look,

which causes them to experience bodily objectification, as he notes:

If someone looks at me, I am conscious of being an object. But this

consciousness can be produced only in and through the existence of the

Other…However that other consciousness and that other freedom are never

given to me; for if they were, they would be known and would therefore be an

object which would cause me to cease being an object (271).

Sartre contends that objectification through the Other's gaze causes people to be aware of their

own bodies. In the Other's gaze, the body becomes a public "object" that others can interpret

(ibid)[28]. However, the Other's gaze causes the person to feel objectified and alienated from their own body since they try to construct their identity through other people. This alienated feeling of objectification seems similar to the split spectatorship experience described by Fanon. However, according to Sartre it derives from the person's inability to understand the Other's perception of them, the "secret of being" (291). However, Fanon seems to adopt Sartre's concept of "being-for-others" in describing how the white gaze can force Black identities into the role of "being-for-other" through what he calls "lactification," "negrophobia" and "double consciousness" (Du Bois). By focusing on Fanon and Sartre's notion of "being-for-others" we can better understand how racist cultures shape gazing practices in cinema and in society. Fanon importantly saw cinema itself as a battleground, arguing that racist films functioned as "a release for collective aggressions" (as quoted in Stam, 26). In Lacanian terms, an erotic and aggressive drive is part and parcel of the gaze. However, these drives are socially constructed, linguistically coded and learned. The racialized role of "being-for-others" (racialized Other) should not be understood biologically, but rather socially. This is comparable to Stuart Hall's theory that language (which is a broad term that can mean film, art, music, photographs etc.) allows people to make sense of the world and attach meaning to things (in this context human bodies). According to Hall, things (again human bodies) do not have any inherent meaning, it is only through culture and language that people attach meaning to things. In *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices* (1997), Hall posits:

> It is participants in a culture who give meaning to people, objects and
>
> events…In part, we give things meaning by how we *represent* them- the

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[28] Sartre also notes in *Being and Nothingness* that when the Other gazes at me in my being-for-others what that person sees is not me (qua being-for itself or personal freedom) but rather "a dead possibility" (376-377). As he states, "Immediately the Other is no longer for me the absolute transcendence which founds me in my being he is a transcended, not by me but by another. My original relation to him -*i.e.,* my relation of being the beloved for my lover, is fixed as a dead-possibility" (ibid).

words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them

we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and

conceptualize them, the values we place on them. Culture, we may say, is

involved in all those practices (3)

In this passage, Hall theorizes that humans are "participants in a culture" that "represent" things

in certain ways. As Fanon argued, white and Black subjects are participants (being-for-others) in

a white supremacist colonial culture that reinforces racial hierarchization. Fanon's

psychoanalytic terms are important to analyze in this project because they help us more fully

understand racialized gazing practices from a more dynamic, postcolonial perspective.

In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon finally theorizes that the white gaze and colonialism

result in the Black subject becoming neurotic, due to the psychological torment of feeling

objectified and experiencing racial discrimination. This form of neurosis, which he defines as

"lactification", leads to Black subjects devaluing their Black individuality in order to assimilate

into white culture (80). According to Fanon, lactification derives from the Black subject's desire

to break free from the white Other's racist ideologies. He states:

If he is overcome to such a degree by a desire to be white, it's because he

lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, in a society that

draws its strength by maintaining this complex, in a society that proclaims the

superiority of one race over another; it is to the extent that society creates

difficulties for him that he finds himself positioned in a neurotic situation

(ibid).

In this quote, Fanon posits the "neurotic" behaviours that lead to lactification derive from the

Black individual's internal alienation, as they feel forced to copy a white dominated culture that

devalues African or Black diasporic traditions and identity. Here, the white Other reinforces an "inferiority complex" that fortifies a desire for the Black subject to whiten (ibid). In return, the domineering gaze of the white subject causes Black subjects to perform racialized acts that are considered "white", further suppressing their Black individuality. Fanon theorizes that the Black subject thus needs to break free from the performative paradigm or script of "whiten or perish" in order to gain or regain a Black identity (ibid). Only by rejecting performative white actions that derive from lactification can the Black subject "choose action (…) with respect to the real source of the conflict, i.e, the social structure" (ibid).[29]

It is important to understand that Fanon's concept of lactification is comparable to Sartre's notion of shame in his theory of being-for-others. According to Sartre, shame is an emotional response that arises between a subject and the Other in being-for-others. According to Fanon's concept of lactification, the Black subject participates in an internal racial shaming of their own Blackness. Sartre suggests that the subject's shame does not only manifest itself psychologically but also physically. In *Being and Nothingness,* Sartre posits

> Pure shame is not a feeling of being this or that guilty object but in general of
> being an object; that is, of recognizing myself in this degraded, fixed, and
> dependent being which I am for the Other…I have "fallen" into the world in
> the midst of things and that I need mediation of the Other in order to be what
> I am (288-289).

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[29] In *Whiteness and the Return of the Black Body* (2005)*,* critic George Yancy contends that Black subjects become "scripted" by the gaze of the white Other since they partake in racialized performative actions when assimilating into white culture (222). He posits that, "The black body appears to have no resistance vis-à-vis the somatic regulatory epistemic regime of whiteness. The black body becomes ontologically pliable, just a thing to be scripted in the inverse image of whiteness" (ibid). Yancy notes how the Black body is "ontologically pliable" in the gaze of the white other (ibid). Thus, as Yancy argues, the Black subject's performative behaviour derives from societal values enforced by white Others. Yancy's notion of "script" is comparable to Fanon's notion of "language" which was analyzed previously. The Black person's body is racialized through the script of racist language that controls the white person's gaze.

As seen in this quote, shame derives from the objectification of the being-for-other in the Other's gaze. Fanon's concept of lactification implies that the neurotic behaviours that stem from the Black subject's shame derives from their insecurities of being objectified (or de‑subjectified). Sartre further states, "Shame is by nature recognition. I recognize that I am as the Other sees me…Shame is an immediate shudder which runs through me from head to foot without any discursive preparation" (222). Here, Sartre theorizes that the being-for-other's shame is not self-reflective but rather a traumatic bodily experience where a person physically feels objectified by the Other's gaze. Similarly for Fanon, a Black subject's performative shame would stem from their traumatic internalization of white values (i.e. anti-Black values).

In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon defines internalized racism in Black subjects as "negrophobia" (129). It is important to note that Fanon analyzes negrophobia as a form of socio-diagnosis, meaning he uses the term to analyze racism as a societal issue as well as an individual issue. Fanon notes that negrophobia derives from the white gaze which causes the Black subject to experience guilt as a result of their Black identity. According to Fanon, negrophobia can be a psychological burden to Black subjects because it reinforces racism between Black people. As Fanon argues, negrophobia exists within the psyche of a Black individual, but it is derived from white anxiety. As Fanon posits:

> We have gradually come to the conclusion that there is a dialectical
> substitution when we switch from the psychology of the white man to that of
> the black man…We are in completely different worlds. An in-depth study
> ought to be conducted as follows: Psychoanalytic interpretation of the black
> man's lived experience/ Psychoanalytic interpretation of the black myth. But
> reality, which is our sole recourse, prevents us from doing so. The facts are

much more complicated. So what are they? The black man is a phobogenic

object, provoking anxiety (129).

In this passage, Fanon notes that the black man is a "phobogenic" a (fear-generating) object for

the white man (ibid). However, in the internalization of racism, or "white identification," the

Black subject is their own object of anxiety and fear. Thus, when the Black subject experiences

negrophobia they are disassociating their bodies from their Black origins and instead performing

bodily actions that adhere to white European values.[30] As Fanon writes, "We shall see that the

alienation of the black man is not an individual question. Alongside phylogeny and ontogeny,

there is also sociogeny" (XV). In this quote, Fanon attempts to define negrophobia as a social

problem. Fanon later posits, "The juxtaposition of the black and white races has resulted in a

massive psycho-existential complex. By analyzing it we aim to destroy it. Many Blacks will not

recognize themselves in the following pages. Likewise many Whites" (XVI). Here, Fanon notes

that neurotic behaviours in both white and Black people construct neurotic societies. However, it

is through the white gaze that Black men are labelled "animals" (143). As Fanon notes, "To have

a phobia about black men is to be afraid of the biological, for the black man is nothing but

biological. Black men are animals" (143). Fanon theorizes that white people project biology and

animality onto Black bodies in order to disavow it in themselves. Fanon posits: "This

[negro]phobia is located at an instinctual, biological level. Going to the extreme, we would say

that the body of the black man hinders the closure of the white man's postural schema at the very

moment when the black man emerges into the white man's phenomenological world" (138). In

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[30] George Yancy's *Whiteness and the Return of the Black Body,* which was referenced previously, notes that the white gaze violates and attempts to control the Black body, demanding Black subjects perform white colonial behaviours. He states, "To have one's body invaded by the white gaze and then to have that body returned as distorted is a powerful experience of violation. The experience presupposes an anti-black lived context, a context within which whiteness gets reproduced and the white body as norm reinscribed" (217). In this passage, Yancy suggests that the Black subject feels ashamed in their forced acquiescence to white negrophobia. Furthermore, the Black subject is unable to confront the white Other and thus casts an "objective" gaze over themselves and other black bodies (92).

this passage, Fanon notes that negrophobia derives from the white man's own inferiority

complex and insecurities with his own "biology" and animality which limits his ability to

solidify his own "bodily schema" (ibid)[31].

Again according to Fanon, the "white world" deconstructs and erases the history of Black

identities, which leads to Black people to interiorizing the white gaze, as he posits: "In the white

world, the man of color encounters difficulties in elaborating his body schema. The image of

one's body is solely negating. It's an image in the third person" (90). Fanon theorizes that the

white gaze causes the Black man to take up a "third-person" consciousness (as in the film

theatre) which causes the Black man to see himself through the objectifying eyes of the white

Other. Fanon, referencing African American writer and activist W.E.B. Du Bois, defines this

psychological phenomenon as "double consciousness"[32].

Invoking W.E.B. Du Bois, Fanon asserts that this "double consciousness" causes Black

people to split their identity (for Du Bois, it was split into African and American). As previously

seen, Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* also returns to the film theatre to ground the potentially

problematic side of having two "frames or reference (111) and points to a more negative merging

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[31] This is comparable to Simone De Beauvior's work *The Second Sex* (1949) which theorizes that women are nothing but biological, nothing but animals in the male gaze. As De Beauvior posits:

> Here, then is why woman has a double and deceptive image: she is everything he craves and everything he does not attain. She is the wise mediator between auspicious Nature and man; and she is the temptation of Nature, untamed against all reason. She is the carnal embodiment of all moral values and their opposites, from good to bad; she is the stuff of action and its obstacle, man's grasp on the world and his failure; as such she is the source al all man's reflection on his existence and all expression he can give of it; however, she works to divert him from himself, to make him sink into silence and death (250-251).

As De Beauvoir notes, men look at women and see "the temptation of Nature, untamed against reason", which means they see their own repressed biology and animality (ibid).

[32] William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was first to introduce the term the "double consciousness" in his work *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). As he states:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (n.p.).

In this passage, Du Bois defines "double consciousness" as a critical "sensation" in which a Black person experiences a feeling of "twoness" in their consciousness (ibid).

of identities, whereas Du Bois describes a more positive merger of being Black and being American.[33] According to Fanon, the Black subject's double consciousness is a result of Black people perceiving themselves through an internal lens governed by white culture (the white gaze).[34] Like the other concepts discussed (negrophobia and lactification), double consciousness is not biological, but rather socially inscribed. The Black individual only internalizes an "inferiority complex" due to the white gaze (Fanon, xiv). In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon recalls another personal experience with the white gaze and how it constructed his double consciousness. He contends, "Locked in this suffocating reification, I appealed to the Other so that his liberating gaze, gliding over my body suddenly smoothed of rough edges, would give me back the lightness of being I thought I had lost" (89). In this passage, Fanon is subjected to the objectifying white gaze of a boy and "disoriented, incapable of confronting the Other" he "transported" himself "far, very far" away and gave himself "up as an object" (92).

Despite the fact that Fanon so vividly described the suffocating fracturing of black subjectivity, he also envisioned a more critical, radical moment of returning the gaze, again, what hooks terms a more "oppositional" moment. In this context, it is important to note that Fanon's own oppositional voice ultimately became a new model for a counter-cinema. Third Cinema directors and artists and *Screen* theorists such as Kobena Mercer used Fanonian thought to create their own postcolonial critique and artistic vision of black voices and identities. As Kobena Mercer writes in his conclusion to the 1995 exhibition *Mirage*: *Enigmas of Race, Difference, and Desire*, Fanon's own understanding of the "theatrical space of cinema" was an important frame

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[33] For a more in-depth comparison, see Marc Black "Fanon and DuBoisian Double Consciousness," *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge vol*. 5, issue 3 (2007), pp. 393-404.
[34] In *Race, Religion, and Sartre's Being-for-Others* (2018), Abdullah Hajjar contends that the white Other's gaze causes a Black person to feel both objectified and racialized. She posits, "The black person in his encounter with the Other not only discovers that he is this 'burst' objectified, temporalized, spatialized, but more importantly he discovers himself and his body as raced" (23).

for the 1955 exhibition, which aimed to reframe black desire and shift the frame of reference, moving away from one "authored by white Hollywood" to a counter-cinema imaginary of "films, photographs and installation pieces that destabilized circuits of looking and seeing, drawing new cosmopolitan encounters between the self and the other" (Dyer, 63). Mercer argued that "For Fanon, the theatrical space of cinema becomes the site of subjection to a complex bombardment of images, looks and ideologies which disorientate our subjectivities and identities, impeding notions of autonomous black identity. The cinematic experience that Fanon reproaches is one authored by white Hollywood (qtd in Dyer, 63)." The conference that accompanied the installation and Frantz Fanon Festival at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London featured Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy and bell hooks, again demonstrating how Fanon's thinking could be woven into a new dialogue about race, difference and desire that unsettled and dismantled white Hollywood conventions.

Section 2.3: The White "Male Gaze": Eroticizing and Commodifying Black Women's Bodies in Film:

In her essay "Feminism as a Persistent Critique of History," bell hooks powerfully returned to Fanon to voice her own oppositional gaze, writing: "Returning to Fanon after almost 20 years of keeping his writing at a distance, I seek to find again that moment…wherein his words touched the longing for freedom (…) and called me into that continuous state of revolution: where strategies of resistance can be imagined" (hooks, 1996, 82). For hooks, theorizing the critical resistance of black female spectatorship helped her imagine revolution. Again complicating Mulvey's understanding of spectatorial relations and cinematic desire, hooks, like Fanon, gives a detailed account of how the desire to "whiten" impacts the Black psyche. In what bell hooks describes as an inherently "white-supremacist cinema", Black female

spectators may be forced to desire white beauty standards in the hope of appealing to both the white gaze and/or the male gaze. This desire to "whiten" can manifest in the Black women spectator's psyche causing them to desire becoming like the image of the desirable white woman on screen.

In this final two sections of this chapter, we will further discuss what hooks understands as the complexities of the Black female cinematic experience, which need to be addressed in order to further complicate Mulvey's gaze theory and correct its "colour blindness" with respect to gender, sex and race. In "Visual Perversions: Race, Sex and Cinematic Pleasure" (2006), Eve Oishi posits that Black women in cinema can be confined to fetishized roles which cause their bodies to either be "looked at" or "not looked at" through Mulvey's notion of the male gaze (644). As we read:

> While Mulvey divides the gendered ways of seeing into the masculine "look"
> and the feminine "to-be-looked-at-ness," people of color have been
> alternatively situated within the frame of classical Hollywood cinema through
> either a monstrous "to-be-looked-at-ness" or the "not-to-be-looked-at-ness"
> of many non-white characters…These functions are by no means exclusive of
> each other, as can be seen in the ways that women of colour can be portrayed
> as simultaneously fetishized and monstrous, as inviting and as repelling a
> desiring gaze. To add racialized ways of looking to a gendered analysis of the
> cinema is to suggest many other possible channels of identification than those
> set forth by Mulvey (ibid).

Just as Fanon appropriated the psychoanalytic theories of Sartre, Oishi and hooks appropriate the spectatorial analysis of both Mulvey and Diawara. Both Fanon and Oishi can help to

conceptualize a theoretical framework for understanding how the gaze of the white "Other" (gendered or not) can shape the construction of a Black subjectivity. A Black spectator can be influenced by the white "Other's" gaze, limiting their ability to properly identify with Black screen images. This of course depends on the libidinal investment of the subject in their "white identification." As I outlined previously, hooks argues that Black male spectators can identify with the "phallocentric gaze" allowing them to occupy an authoritative gendered gaze (hooks, 118). In comparison, hooks theorizes that Black women spectators are not interpellated to take up a masculinized phallocentric gaze and thus are able to take up an oppositional gaze in order to reject racist and sexualized screen images. However, what happens when Black female spectators are faced with false "exotic" and/or "primitive" filmic depictions of their Black femininity? (hooks, 73).

In "Back to the Avant- Garde: The Progressive Vision" (1996), hooks theorizes that some mainstream Black male filmmakers inaccurately depict Black women as "sexual" and as "betrayer[s]" of their own black identity (127). As hooks indicates:

> [The] depiction of the sexual black woman as a betrayer of blackness is
> common in the works of successful contemporary mainstream black
> film makers. It seems both white and black audiences are more
> comfortable watching black women when we are kept in our place by
> sexist, racist characterizations (127).

In this passage, hooks notes that certain Black male directors reinforce racist and/or sexist cinematic depictions of Black women in order to appeal to the white male gaze. In her chapter "Selling Hot Pussy: Representations of Black Female Sexuality in the Cultural Marketplace" (1992), hooks posits that a Black woman's body can be objectified and sexualized in films in

order to "appeal to white people" and their gaze (73)[35]. According to hooks, the visual

exploitation of Black women's bodies derives from American cultures that reinforce "white

supremacist ideologies." In "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance" (1992), hooks theorizes

that white spectators find sexual pleasure in visually dominating the Black "Other" (23). In

addition, she argues that white spectators do not wish to have an authentic connection with the

Black "Other" but rather want to consume African American culture in order to provide

spontaneity to their lives. In the arena of the cinema, certain white heterosexual male spectators

use Black women's screen images as "playground[s]" to exploit and to remain in positions of

racialized power (ibid). In "Eating the Other" (1992), hooks elaborates on black women's

commodification as racialized screen images:

> When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for
>
> pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of
>
> individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where
>
> members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their
>
> power-over in intimate relations with the Other (ibid).

In filmic terms, the white male gaze eroticizes the images of Black women as not just sexualized,

in a broad sense, but also sexualized specifically for white men. For example, in Marc Forster's

film *Monster's Ball* (2001) Leticia Musgrove (played by Halle Berry) has an erotic relationship

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[35] In the early 1970s, black filmmakers in Hollywood started to produce blaxploitation films - a form of exploitation film that focused on black protagonists and communities. While the blaxploitation era was a chance to celebrate new African American heroes, some critics critiqued these cinematic narratives and their stereotypical depictions of black identities. Blaxploitation films often reinforce sexualized depictions of black women in order to appeal to heterosexual white men who view eroticized African American bodies. Examples of blaxploitation films that hyper-sexualize black women are; *Coffy* (1973), *Foxy Brown* (1974), *The Big Bird Cage* (1972) and *Street Sisters* (1974). See, for example Angelique Harris and Omar Mushtaq,"Creating Racial Identities Through Film: A Queer and Gendered Analysis of Blaxploitation Films," *Western Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 37, no. 1 (2013): 28-38 and Tom Symmons (2014): "The Birth of Black Consciousness on the Screen'?: The African American Historical Experience, Blaxploitation, and the Production and Reception of *Sounder* (1972)," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* vol. 35, no. 2 (2014), 1-23.

with Hank Grotowski (played by Billy Bob Thorton). Throughout the film, Berry is nude in sex scenes with Billy. These scenes subject Berry to the gaze of Billy's white male character and the white male viewer who identifies with his character. In this example, the white heterosexual male spectator may draw scopophilic pleasure from the sexualized image of Halle (a Black woman) on screen. This is comparable to Jacques Lacan's theory of the gaze being "twofold" in his work "What is a Picture?" (1981). According to Lacan, the gaze can be both erotic (act of "sexual union") and aggressive (act of destruction toward "death") at the same time (107). As he posits:

> It is this [a splitting] that comes into play, quite obviously, both in
> sexual union and in the struggle to the death. In both situations, the
> being breaks up, in an extraordinary way, between its being and its
> semblance, between itself and that paper tiger it shows to the other…It
> is through this separated form of himself that the being comes into play
> in his effects of life and death, and it might be said that is with help of
> this doubling of the other, or of oneself, that is realized the conjunction
> from which proceeds the renewal of beings in reproduction (107).

In this passage, Lacan theorizes that there is a "doubling" of the self which leads to both an erotic and aggressive gaze. In viewing *Monster's Ball* (2001), a white heterosexual male spectator may use his erotic desires to gaze at the Halle Berry's naked body and pull the "looked-at-ness" towards him in an erotic bond. At the same time, the white heterosexual male spectator may use his aggressive gaze to look at Halle and reject her sexualized image in order to eliminate the "to-be-looked-ness" of her gaze. It is important to note that this form of white gazing and sexualization of the Black woman's screen image stems from white Hollywood cinematic

conventions that reinforce a racial hierarchization. This "racial hierarchization" that is problematic to filmic production is overlooked in Mulvey's "male gaze" theory.

In "Selling Hot Pussy", hooks also notes that the white male's gaze participates in a scopophilic pleasure that derives from a desire to visually control Black men and women's screen images. She posits, "Both the black man and the black woman are presented as available for the white male's sexual consumption. In the context of postmodern sexual practice, the masturbatory voyeuristic technologically-based fulfillment of desire is more exciting than actually possessing any real Other" (74). In this passage, hooks notes that the white man's scopophilic pleasures are stronger than his desires to physically "posse[ss] any real Other" (ibid). According to hooks, the white heterosexual man's scopophilic desire to visually dominate the Black man and/or woman's screen image stems from the historical experience of slavery. As hooks states in activist terms:

> In white supremacist society, white people can "safely" imagine that
> they are invisible to black people since the power they have historically
> asserted, and even now collectively assert over black people, accorded
> them the right to control the black gaze. As fantastic as it may seem,
> racist white people find it easy to imagine that black people cannot see
> them if within their desire they do not want to be seen by the dark
> Other. One mark of oppression was that black folks were compelled to
> assume the mantle of invisibility, to erase all traces of their subjectivity
> during slavery and the long years of racial apartheid, so that they could
> be better, less threatening servants. An effective strategy of white
> supremacist terror and dehumanization during slavery centred around

> white control of the black gaze. Black slaves, and later manumitted
>
> servants, could be brutally punished for looking, for appearing to
>
> observe the whites they serving, as only a subject can observe, or see.
>
> To be fully an object then was to lack the capacity to see or recognize
>
> reality (168).

As hooks argues, the desires of white male spectators go back to this "master-slave" mentality, white slaveholders punishing Black slaves and censoring their gazes. In a "white supremacist society," white male spectators find visual pleasure in looking at a Black man or woman who is, in turn, unable to return the gaze or look back at him. As hooks also states, "racist white people find it easy to imagine that black people cannot see them if within their desire they do not want to be seen by the dark Other" (ibid). Thus, the white male spectator does not only find scopophilic pleasure in looking at a sexualized Black man or woman on screen but also finds pleasure in rejecting an authoritative Black gaze. This follows a similar dynamic to what we previously discussed in the context of theorizing Lacan's erotic and aggressive gazes in "What is a Picture?" (1981). The white male spectator uses his erotic gaze to sexually desire the Black man or woman's screen image and uses his aggressive gaze to repel the authoritative Black gaze[36]. In order to reject this historical racial hierarchization of the white male gaze, hooks, building on Diawara's notion of resisting spectatorship, calls for Black female spectators to cultivate a critical, oppositional gaze that would overturn this racial hierarchization and

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[36] In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon contends that white men are automatically homosexually attracted to Black men. As Fanon posits, "Every intellectual gain calls for a loss of sexual potential. The civilized white man retains an irrational nostalgia for the extraordinary times of sexual licentiousness, orgies, unpunished rapes, and unrepressed incest. In a sense, these fantasies correspond to Freud's life instinct. Projecting his desires onto the black man, the white man behaves as if the black man actually had them" (142-143). In relation to film, following hooks and Fanon, one might say the white male gaze aggresses against and sexually possesses the Black male body but also seeks to disavow a returned erotic gaze.

commodification and reject the gendered cinematic conventions that place Black and white women in passive roles. While hooks prioritizes the need for Black women to take up an oppositional cinematic gaze, she also believes like Diawara that contemporary filmmakers need to create new, oppositional narratives that challenge "white supremacist" cinematic narratives and deconstruct anti-Black and patriarchal conventions.

Section 2.4: Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* (1991)*:* An "Oppositional" Black LGBTQ Cinematic Narrative that Resists "White Male Gazing"

Again, in her chapter "Back to the Avant-Garde: The Progressive Vision", hooks contends that some Black male directors create films that cater to white male gazing (128). Hooks argues that Black male directors need to create new oppositional narratives in order to challenge preexisting anti-Black cinematic conventions that restrict Black men and women's filmic agency. These new oppositional narratives should account for more complex relationships between "race, sex and class" (ibid). By exploring the intersection between "race, sex and class" Black male directors, argues hooks, could portray Black men and women in new authoritative positions, thus deconstructing anti-Black cinematic narratives (ibid). As hooks states:

> If more black male filmmakers were looking at the ways race, sex, and
>
> class converge, then their articulations of black experience might offer
>
> us more daring, complex interpretations-among them representations
>
> of black masculinity. Until black male artists challenge and change
>
> sexist thinking, their works will never have the power to engage black
>
> women and men fully in the work of liberation (ibid).

As hooks argues, Black male directors have often relied on the same patriarchal cinematic conventions as white filmmakers. The reason for this, according to hooks, is that certain Black

male directors continue to create works that appeal to the "patriarchal imagination" ("Artistic Integrity: Race and Accountability", 126). As hooks posits:

> There is a continuum in the patriarchal imagination that informs these early works [*Sweetback's Baadass Song* (1971), *Bush Mama* (1975) and *Passing Through* (1977)] and films made by black filmmakers today, whether independent or mainstream. This continued allegiance to patriarchy has made it easier for black male filmmakers who are in no way inventive when it comes to their construction of gender to make it in Hollywood (ibid).

In order to appeal to the "patriarchal imagination", some Black male directors appropriate "white supremacist aesthetics" by "making their lighter-skinned characters more feminine, more desirable; glorying in thin bodies; imagining black female sexuality ass whorish" (ibid). This reinforcement of "white supremacist aesthetics" by Black and white male directors fortifies the racial hierarchization produced by Hollywood. In Fanonian terms, the Black male director may portray "white supremacist aesthetics" in order to appeal to his own dizzying "double-consciousness," which white Hollywood has ingrained into his psyche. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968), Fanon notes, "The colonized intellectual, at the very moment when he undertakes a work of art, fails to realize he is using techniques and a language borrowed from the occupier. The colonized intellectual who returns to his people through works of art behaves in fact like a foreigner (160). In this passage, Fanon theorizes that the adoption of colonial language (in this case white Hollywood aesthetics) by the colonized Black intellectual further alienates the intellectual from their own culture.

It is important to note, however, that while there are many contemporary and classical films created by Black and white men that inaccurately portray Black women's screen images as "exotic" and "primitive," there are also Black feminist films that disrupt the white male gaze by creating more complex cinematic narratives that are centered on Black femininity ("Selling Hot Pussy", 73). According to hooks, such Black feminist films allow Black women spectators to engage with cinematic narratives through a more nuanced and critical spectatorial position that enables her to desire filmic images anew (76). As hooks posits:

> When black women relate to our bodies, our sexuality, in ways that
>
> place erotic recognition, desire, pleasure, and fulfillment at the center of
>
> our efforts to create radical black female subjectivity, we can make new
>
> and different representations of ourselves as sexual subjects. We must
>
> no longer shy away from the critical project of openly interrogating and
>
> exploring representations of black sexuality as they appear everywhere,
>
> especially in popular culture (ibid).

In this passage, hooks suggests that Black feminist films must interrogate and dialogue with representations of black sexuality circulating in popular culture. This would allow Black female spectators to identify with "erotic" Black screen images as a way to empower "Black female subjectivity" (ibid). By identifying with different screen images of blackness, Black female spectators are able to engage with the cinematic narrative through a process of recognition, and then critique it through an oppositional gaze. In Freudian terms, Black female spectators are able to use their ego-libido (desire in identification) and object-libido (sexual desire) when viewing a Black feminist film ("On Narcissism an Introduction", 77). A black woman in the theatre may use her ego-libido to identify with the active Black female character and use her object-libido to

sexually desire the passive or absent male character. Or, the Black lesbian female spectator may use her ego-libido and object-libido to identify and sexually desire the active Black female character[37]. In her chapter "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators", hooks notes that Julie Dash's film *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) is an example of a Black feminist film that dismantles white patriarchal cinematic conventions by placing "black females at the center of the narrative" (130)[38]. By making the protagonist a Black lesbian woman, Dash is able to limit Mulvey's (white) male gaze theory. Dash's film restricts the lure of the male gaze since heterosexual white male spectators are unable to derive pleasure from looking at a powerful and non-sexualized female character on screen, and are also thwarted (by gender and race) from identifying with such a character[39]. Since heterosexual white male spectators are overdetermined and can't identify with a female screen image, they are forced to watch the film through a non-authoritative spectatorial position. As hooks states, "Clearly, the impact of racism and sexism so over-determine spectatorship-not only what we look at but who we identify with-that viewers who are not black females find it hard to empathize with the central characters in the movie. They are adrift without a white presence in the film" (ibid). In this passage, hooks theorizes that Black feminist films, like *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), do not fascinate or fix white male spectatorial desire but rather set it "adrift" (ibid). This goes against Mulvey's concept of "fascination" articulated in her early essay on the male gaze ("Visual Pleasure", 18). As briefly noted in the first section of this chapter, Mulvey theorizes that patriarchal cinematic narratives

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[37] The ego-libido and object-libido of the lesbian spectator will be examined in more depth in the third chapter of this project.

[38] It is important to acknowledge that Julie Dash was not the first Black filmmaker to create feminist films on black subjectivity. Influential directors and films that preceded her are Kathleen Collins' *Losing Ground* (1982) and Maureen Blackwood and Isaac Julien's *Passion of Remembrance* (1986). Blackwood and Julien's film, which has been described as a "visual mosaic" of Black experience in 1980s Britain, was the debut feature of the Sankofa Film and Video Collective.

[39] An argument could be made that a white or Black male spectator could find visual pleasure through masochistic desire. The white or Black male spectator could use their ego-libido to identify with a passive or absent male character and use their object-libido to sexually desire the active Black female protagonist.

work to fascinate and control heterosexual spectatorial desire. Fascination, according to Mulvey, involves a dual relationship between the spectator's "loss of ego" and reinforcement of the ego in the cinematic narrative (ibid). The spectator is "fascinated" by the screen images because they are able to identify with a character and regain a sense of self. As Mulvey posits:

> Quite apart from the extraneous similarities between screen and mirror
> (the framing of the human form in its surroundings, for instance), the
> cinema has structures of fascination strong enough to allow temporary
> loss of ego while simultaneously reinforcing it. The sense of forgetting
> the world as the ego has come to perceive it (I forget who I am and
> where I was) is nostalgically reminiscent of the pre-subjective moment
> of image recognition. While at the same time, the cinema has
> distinguished itself in the production of ego ideals, through the star
> system for instance. Stars provide a focus or centre both to screen space
> and screen story where they act out a complex process of likeness and
> difference (the glamourous impersonates the ordinary) (ibid).

Mulvey's notion of fascination is not only a forgetting; it is a spellbound silencing of sorts. It does not account for the empowering agency of oppositional cinematic narratives in Black feminist films, since white heterosexual men and women cannot properly identify through a "process" of recognition with the Black female screen image (hooks, 130). Thus, Black female protagonists do restrict the white spectator's ability to sexually desire and identify with a cinematic screen image, according to hooks. Although Black feminist films could "fascinate" Black female spectators who are able to properly identify and desire with the screen images and stars, their modus operandi is more to deconstruct and unsettle, to critically provoke. According

to hooks, certain films made by African American women purposely deconstruct preexisting cinematic conventions that reinforce white male gazing[40]. In doing so, African American women directors create new alternative and oppositional spectatorial gazing practices that subvert Mulvey's male gaze theory. As hooks posits:

> Without providing 'realistic' positive representations that emerge only as a response to the totalizing nature of existing narratives, they offer points of radical departure. Opening up a space for the assertion of a critical black female spectatorship, they do not simply offer diverse representations, they imagine new transgressive possibilities for the formulation of identity (ibid).

Hooks notes that oppositional narratives in Black feminist films do not only challenge preexisting racist or sexist cinematic conventions but also provide other spectators "new transgressive possibilities for the formulation of [their] identit[ies]" (ibid). Thus, oppositional gazes and/or narratives do not only reshape "the formulation of identit[ies]" for Black spectators alone, but can also empower LGBTQ+ spectatorship. Oppositional gazes and/or narratives allow LGBTQ+ spectators to gain authoritative positions in their viewing experience that challenge preexisting gendered or sexualized cinematic conventions. Thus, the absence of the stifling "male gaze" in Black feminist films like Dash's *Daughters in the Dust* (1991) allows Black and LGBTQ+ spectators to create new spectatorial identities that are not regulated by racialized or gendered cinematic conventions.

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[40] For example, Julie Dash's short film *Illusions* (1982) presents a narrative that critiques the inadequate visual representations of Black women in classical Hollywood cinema. Dash's filmic narrative centres on a young African American singer (Esther) who is chosen to provide a voice-over (a form of illusion) for a white female actress. Dash uses her film to as a political piece to showcase how racism in classical Hollywood films "forced African-American women to the wayside…only to be forgotten" (Felton, n.p).

As numerous theorists have argued, black spectators can critically analyze the regime of whiteness and how it informs their own cinematic experiences (Fanon); black spectators can also adopt oppositional gazes or resisting gazes (hooks and Diawara) to critically challenge racist and sexist screen images or create new spectatorial identities (Dash). As hooks shows, Black female spectators can take up an oppositional gaze that allows them to critically assess false cinematic depictions of both Black and white women. In "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" hooks critiques Mulvey's male gaze theory by showing how Black spectators can identify and desire differently as spectators, due to their different experiences with race and/or sexuality. With that said, many Black women directors use their films to not only empower Black women's subjectivity but also to normalize visual depictions of LGBTQ+ desires. In *Outing the Black Feminist Filmmaker in Julie Dash's Illusions* (2004)*,* Judylyn S. Ryan notes that Julie Dash's film *Daughters of the Dust* does not only reinforce Black empowerment, but also normalizes LGBTQ+ cinematic desire. As she states:

> As a filmmaker, Dash does not simply depict or acknowledge silence.
> Rather, she uses camera work to enunciate silence in order to
> demonstrate its discursive efficacy. In *Daughters of the Dust,* for
> example she uses the silent vocabulary of embrace, touch and gaze to
> narrate the lesbian text of Trula and Yellow Mary's relationship.
> Given the film's 1902 setting, to have done otherwise, to have allowed
> a verbal narration of this "visual subplot," would have misrepresented
> the discursive constraints on lesbian experience (1323).

Here, Ryan states that lesbian desire is exemplified in Dash's film through the use of body language. By normalizing lesbian desire and Black screen images, Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*

is revolutionary since it uses race and gender to combat the white male gaze. Dash's work is one of many Black feminist films that showcases Black women and LGBTQ+ desires together[41]. As this chapter has shown, the binary code of gender cannot be the only category used to critically assess cinematic gazing. In order to more fully and critically assess this complex relationship between race and gender that informs cinematic gazing, this chapter has argued for a more fluid/free understanding of gazing that un-hinges Mulvey's "male gaze" theory by acknowledging and analyzing multiple spectatorial positions. In this spirit, the next chapter will investigation multiple forms of LGBTQ+ gazing and/or looking.

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[41] Other films that focus on Black women and LGBTQ+ desires are; *Passion of Remembrance* (1986), *The Watermelon Woman* (1996), *Pariah* (2011) and *Rafiki* (2018).

Chapter 3: LGBTQ+ Cinematic Gazing: Dismantling Cisnormative and Heteronormative Narratives in Classical and Contemporary Hollywood Films

> Each type of cinema (as well as every film theory) imagines an ideal spectator, which means it postulates a certain relation between the (body of the) spectator and the (properties of the) image on the screen, however much at first sight the highlighted terms are 'understanding'… What is called classical narrative cinema, for instance, can be defined by the way a given film engages, addresses, and envelops the spectatorial body (4).
>
> Malte Hagener and Thomas Elsaesser, *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses* (2015)

Section 3.1: Returning to Queer Gazing and/or Looking:

In the field of psychology and social science, the concept of gender is often debated in the context of its importance in establishing individual rights, employment opportunities, and equal pay. Many feminists and queer theorists believe that it is important to rearticulate the foundations surrounding sex and gender identity in support of marginalized individuals and people who surgically alter their sex characteristics. In the 1960s, feminist film theorists started to examine psychological relationships between screen images, sexuality and gender formation. In order to critique cinema, film theorists used and continue to use the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan and Sigmund Freud to analyze heteronormative and/or cisnormative classical and contemporary cinematic conventions[42]. However, the use of Lacanian and Freudian theory is heavily debated amongst contemporary film theorists since many believe gender and sexuality are different concepts, and therefore demand different psychoanalytic theories when analyzing spectatorial identification and desire. As I have noted throughout this project, Laura Mulvey's

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[42] In classical Hollywood films, stereotypical queer coded characters were often inaccurately portrayed as monsters or villains. Additionally, these characters were not given positive heteronormative and/or cis-normative traits. Queer characters were inaccurately portrayed as psychologically unstable. For example, in the famous end scene of Alfred Hitchcock's film *Psycho,* Norman Bates storms into the Bates' mansion basement wearing his mother's clothing while trying to kill Lila Crane with a knife. This scene, along with many others in classical Hollywood associates gender variance with mental instability which results in horror. It is important to recognize Hollywood's historically false depictions of gender variance so that contemporary films can create alternative cinematic narratives that accurately portray LGBTQ+ identities. See, for example, Harry M. Bernshoff's *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film* (Manchester University Press, 1997).

foundational essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) does not address LGBTQ+

spectators and/or cinematic characters. It is important to acknowledge that Mulvey's early essay

focuses on classical Hollywood films, and during this time filmic representations of LGBTQ+

peoples were censored and not as prevalent as they are now[43]. However, Mulvey's theory of the

male gaze still serves as a foundational concept for other film theorists who have since

developed psychoanalytic theories that include multiple forms of LGBTQ+ spectatorial

identification and desire[44]. In her most recent work *Afterimages: On Cinema, Women and*

Changing Times (2019), Mulvey briefly acknowledges the importance agency and active reading

strategies of queer spectators and notes that diverse gender and sexual identities can alter the way

a person engages with a cinematic narrative. As she contends:

> Throughout film history, queer spectators have, of course, read against
>
> Hollywood's conformist grain, finding their own visual pleasures and
>
> queering the gaze, playing with and against the way in which the gender rules
>
> and roles were inscribed into the language of the cinema itself…But the real
>
> strides made since 1975 in gender and sexual politics have changed the

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[43] Here one should also consider the role censorship has played historically in Hollywood policing of LGBTQ characters. As Linda Holtzmann and Leon Sharpe write in their chapter "Sexual Orientation and the Fabrication of Normal", it was not until 1931 that the Hollywood film industry started "policing and censoring itself through the Production Code and Hays Censorship Office," but as a result of the new stifling production code any "reference to homosexuality, gay and lesbian characters and themes, and even words like 'pansy' were out" (466).

[44] In Susan Bordo's article "It's Not the Same for Women" (2015) found in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* dossier *The Male Gaze in Retrospect,* she notes that Mulvey's "Visual Pleasures" serves as an important theoretical work in gaze theory since it shows how gender identification is relevant when analyzing visual pleasure. As Bordo posits:

> I assign Mulvey in my classes to raise such issues, and for another reason too. Her essay
> (along with Berger's much more reader-friendly *Ways of Seeing*, and E. Ann Kaplan's 1983
> "Is the Gaze Male?") is a key example of that exciting cultural moment when theories of "the
> look" of others- first espoused by Jean-Paul Sartre, whose phenomenology of *le regard* is
> lacking any gendered, racial , or cultural dimension- were subjected to that explosive,
> fabulously generating insight: It's not the same for men and women…I assign Mulvey
> because I look at her "theory" the same way I look at cultural criticism- that is, in historical
> context. Much of "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" is frustratingly opaque and jargon
> clogged- hardly unusual in poststructuralist theorizing…But the piece remains among the
> most generative works of an era that forced us to see that gender matters (3)

meanings of male and female, masculinity and femininity, that were inscribed

into the essay. So too, of course, has film spectatorship changed (246).

Mulvey notes that since the publication of her "Visual Pleasures" essay, "queer" cinematic

spectators have altered the way that Hollywood images are understood. Yet there is one question

that is not answered in her statement which is precisely how LGBTQ+ spectatorial desires shape

the way one engages with cinematic narratives. Mulvey in *Afterimages* only starts to gesture

towards alternative spectatorship models and feminist viewing strategies that could go hand-in-

hand with a new counter culture of filmic images and a more "thoughtful film spectatorship", for

example pointing to essay films and digital re-mixes and mash ups as new ways of "recording

images and creating stories" (252-253). She claims, referencing film theorist Francesco Casetti

that "cinema has moved from a technological straightjacket into a lived flexibility" but

ultimately fails to fully sketch out the contours of this fluid, "lived flexibility" (255)[45]. In order to

further un-hinge Mulvey's theory of the male gaze and arrive at a more fluid/free understanding

of cinematic gazing and looking, this chapter will explore multiple forms of LGBTQ+

spectatorial desire. In addition, this chapter will argue that spectatorial identification and desire

are not biologically determined but rather socially conditioned. In this chapter I turn to

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[45] Mulvey quickly mentioned the digital mashup and remix in *Afterimages* as examples of new creative storytelling practices that might reverse patriarchal codes. Here one might also look to the fanvid as another digital participatory culture in critical media studies that gives spectators an opportunity to remix Hollywood images and even reverse the gaze. Although I am not able to fully engage with this alternative spectatorial practice, I would like to point to an interesting example of how fanvidders could create an alternative feminist gaze. As Turk points out in her essay "'Your Own Imagination': Vidding and Vidwatching as Collaborative Interpretation," Luminosity's short fanvid *"Vogue"* (2007) reframes the male action film *300* (Zack Synder, 2006/2007) "as a queer dance floor" (97). This fan video according to Turk "is grounded in the profoundly fannish impulse to 'exceed and rework' media texts, to make them show what we want to see; in this case, what we want to see is actually not so much a herd of voguing Spartans (although this too is an entertaining prospect) as the creation of a female gaze, a female subjectivity that not merely rejects but destabilizes the original film" (100). As Luminosity herself explained in an interview, this was her "chance to do a bait and switch, and turn the 'male gaze' back onto itself" (qtd. in Turk, 98). See Tisha Turk, "'Your Own Imagination': Vidding and Vidwatching as Collaborative Interpretation," *Film & Film Culture* 5 (2010), 88-110.

contemporary cultural studies, film studies and queer studies debates on gender and sexuality to complicate spectatorial desire and argue for a cinematic spectatorship is inherently fluid/free.

Section 3.2: The Duality of Libidos/Desires in the Lesbian Look: Dismantling Mulvey's "Masculinized" Female Spectator

In the first chapter of this project I briefly outlined the lesbian look as another LGBTQ+ spectatorial gaze that decouples the spectator from the patriarchal structuring of classical Hollywood cinema. In the second chapter, I also looked briefly at Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) as an example of an "oppositional" Black LGBTQ cinematic narrative that resists "white male gazing." As I noted previously, the lesbian look allows lesbian spectators to take up a looking position that is not governed by the "masculinization" of Mulvey's male gaze ("Afterthoughts", 31). The limitations surrounding thinking about lesbian spectatorship in Mulvey's theory of the male gaze derive from her heterosexual understanding of feminine and masculine psychological Freudian dispositions. In Mulvey's binary-structured film theory, masculinity and femininity are conventional genderings of "active" and "passive" sexual desire. In "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'" (1981), she nuances her analysis of masculine and feminine filmic desires by returning to Freud's Oedipal complex. She argues that female spectators can gain an authoritative looking position only if they return to their "masculinized" predispositions that develop during the pre-Oedipal/phallic stage of their psychosexual development. Freud speaks of this in *Female Sexuality* (1931)*,* where he notes that in the pre-Oedipal stage boys and girls possess a dual libido which causes them to possess both masculine and feminine psychological dispositions (*Female Sexuality,* 240). As he states:

If we now survey the stage of sexual development in the female which I have

been describing, we cannot resist coming to a definite conclusion about

female sexuality as a whole. We have found the same libidinal forces at work

in it as in the male child and we have been able to convince ourselves that for

a period of time these forces follow the same course and have the same

outcome in each. Biological factors subsequently deflect those libidinal forces

[in the girl's case] from their original aims and conduct even active and in

every sense masculine trends into feminine channels…Psychoanalysis teaches

us to manage with a single libido, which, it is true, has both active and

passive aims (that is, modes of satisfaction) (239-240).

In this passage, Freud notes that masculine (active) and feminine (passive) dispositions derive

from a "single libido" that is inherent in a child's psyche in the pre-Oedipal stage of

psychosexual development (ibid). Feminist critics of psychoanalysis like Gayle Rubin's "The

Traffic of Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" (1975) discuss how Freud, in his

desire for scientific legitimacy, "biologizes" his theory of the unconscious. As Rubin states:

In short, feminine development could no longer be taken for granted as a reflex

of biology. Rather, it had become immensely problematic. It is in explaining

the acquisition of "femininity" that Freud employs the concepts of penis envy

and castration which have infuriated feminists since he first introduced

them…Freud's account can be read as claiming that femininity is a

consequence of the anatomical differences between the sexes. He has therefore

been accused of biological determinism (187).

Freud's "biological" understanding of the masculine and feminine dispositions does not take into

consideration socio-cultural factors that shape gender formation. This is evident in Freud's

concept of the phallic stage of psychosexual development, where he posits that the child's libido

will focus on their genitals which helps them construct their gender identity ("Three Essays on

the Theory of Sexuality", 199). It is through genital and parental identification that the child

develops masculine or feminine traits in the construction of their gender identity. Thus, Freud

believes that the development of masculine and feminine traits is a kind of biological destiny,

meanwhile feminist rereadings of Freud's psychosexual stages of development would reframe

his biological theory and state that, "Sociocultural factors subsequently deflect those libidinal

forces… and *retroactively gender them in a biologistic way*."

In "Afterthoughts", Mulvey suggests that female spectators can access their pre-Oedipal

"masculine" dispositions to identify with the active male protagonist on screen. Through a

masculinized spectatorial position the female spectator is not forced to identify with the passive

female screen image, but instead is able to reject it. In her seminal "Afterthoughts on 'Visual

Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'" (1981), Mulvey posits:

> The feminine cannot be conceptualized as different, but rather only as
>
> *opposition* (passivity) in an antinomic sense, or as *similarity* (the phallic
>
> phase)…This shifting process, this definition in terms of opposition or
>
> similarity, leaves women also shifting between the metaphoric opposition
>
> 'active' and 'passive'. The correct road, *femininity,* leads to increasing
>
> repression of 'the active' (the 'phallic phase' in Freudian terms). In this sense
>
> Hollywood genre films structured around masculine pleasure, offering an
>
> identification with the *active* point of view, allow a woman spectator to

rediscover that lost aspect of her sexual identity, the never fully repressed bed-

rock of feminine neurosis (33-34)[46].

In this passage, Mulvey notes that femininity should not be understood as a sexual trait that is

different from masculinity but should rather be defined as oppositional to it. In short, femininity

and masculinity constitute a social and cultural binary, not biological difference. According to

Mulvey, the oppositional feminine position of women spectators stems from the suppression of

their masculine psychological dispositions. However, Mulvey's theory of an active, masculine

point of view still only takes heterosexual women into account and does not consider lesbian

spectators. Additionally, Mulvey's theory of masculine pleasure seems inadvertently to return to

stifling binaries and reinforce the power inequities of the heteronormative gaze theory since she

defines femininity as a female trait and masculinity as a male trait. In her thesis, *Toward a Queer

Gaze: Cinematic Representations of Queer Female Sexuality in Experimental/Avant-Garde and

Narrative Film* (2010), Erin Christine Tobin notes that Mulvey's revised Freudian and Lacanian

psychoanalytic framework still does not account for a female spectator's ability to "actively look

and desire" (18). Tobin states:

> [Mulvey] still does not address other possibilities of spectatorship. Because she
>
> is trapped by the psychoanalytic polarization of essentialized heterosexual
>
> female femininity and heterosexual male masculinity, she is unable to address
>
> how, or if, a feminine female spectator may actively look at and desire a central
>
> male character, or hero, on screen, or how a female spectator may assume an
>
> active viewing position without trans-sex identification or how a female
>
> spectator- whether feminine, masculine, heterosexual, homosexual, or queer-

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[46] It is important to acknowledge that in this quote Mulvey herself is trying to overcome Freud's "biologism" by interpreting "masculine" and "feminine" as social constructs rather than biological functions.

may actively look at other women on screen with desire, but not necessarily

identify with them" (ibid).

Similar to my own project, Tobin critiques Mulvey's theory of the male gaze, noting that it does

not take into consideration active female spectators who possess an authoritative looking position

that does not relying on an active male protagonist[47]. Like Tobin, I argue that the lesbian

spectator does not identify with the active male protagonist nor is she governed by the male gaze

of the cinematic narrative. Instead, the lesbian spectator informs her look through her own

unique sexual orientation. The fluid sexual desires of lesbian spectators allow them to look past

the male gaze cinematic structure and search for their own object of desire. Mulvey's insistence

that classical Hollywood cinema controls spectatorial desire through heteronormative

conventions does not account for their powerful oppositional gaze.

As briefly mentioned before, lesbian spectators take up a cinematic looking position that

is invested in both identifying with and sexually desiring the female screen image[48]. The dual

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[47] Since Mulvey published her work "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) other film theorists have adapted her feminist film theory to account for heterosexual (do you mean homosexual) and queer women spectators. However, certain film theorists recycle the heterosexual structure used by Mulvey in their own gaze theories. For example, E. Ann Kaplan's essay "Is the Gaze Male?" (1983) falls back on Mulvey's gendered gaze theory since it theorizes that female spectators can gain an authoritative cinematic gaze only by adopting a masculine position and rejecting feminine characteristics. She posits, "When the man steps out of his traditional role as the one who controls the whole action, and when he is set up as a sex object, the woman then takes on the masculine role as bearer of the gaze and initiator of the action. She nearly loses her traditionally feminine characteristics" (215).

[48] In the appendix of her most recent work *Afterimages: On Cinema, Women and Changing Times* (2019), Mulvey answers a critical question regarding the absence of queer women as spectators and her limited investigation into non-heterosexual desire in her psychoanalytic discussion of the male gaze in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema". According to Mulvey, the essay could have included an analysis of female spectators who experience visual pleasure by desiring the passive female on screen. However, Mulvey believes that this could only be achieved if the female spectator does not reinforce the castration anxiety in male viewers. She argues:

> Rather than arguing that the very perfection of the female body, the exquisite fetish, acts as a defence against male castration anxiety, I could have argued that women spectators, untroubled by castration anxiety, could find visual pleasure in a female, and so too a lesbian gaze when the performance of femininity is 'the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look' (Mulvey, 245).

While Mulvey's response to the criticism proposes a more inclusive model in analyzing processes of filmic identification in non-heterosexual women, it still does not go far enough. Mulvey does not address how lesbian

desires of the lesbian spectator are comparable to the dualism of the libido/drives in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. In Freudian terms, the lesbian spectator is using her ego-libido to identify with the female screen image and uses her object-libido to sexually desire the female screen image. It is important to note that the ego-libido takes an object outside itself (in this case the screen image) as a model for itself. As Freud states in "On Narcissism an Introduction" (1914), "The value of the concepts 'ego-libido' and 'object-libido' lies in the fact that they are derived from the study of the intimate characteristics of neurotic and psychotic processes. A differentiation of libido into a kind which is proper to the ego and one which is attached to objects is an unavoidable corollary to an original hypothesis which distinguished between sexual instincts and ego-instincts" (77). In this passage, Freud theorizes that the ego-libido is a desire to identify or be "attached to objects" rather than being a sexually motivated desire. The lesbian spectator may use her ego-libido to identify with either an active or passive female screen image. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the lesbian spectator's identificatory process is not conditioned by the male gaze but rather stems from her own playful desire. In Lacanian terms, the lesbian spectator uses a more "aggressive" gaze to repel the "to be looked-*at*" of the female screen image by identifying *with* the female screen image. As Lacan notes in "What is a Picture?" (1981), "In the scopic field, everything is articulated between two terms that act in an antinomic way- on the side of things, there is the gaze, that is to say, things look at me, and yet I see them" (109). The lesbian spectator's playful gaze causes her to desire by identifying with the female screen image, while also aggressively rejecting the other's gaze that "look[s] at" her (ibid).

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looking could still exist without femininity being the "content of the film [and] the direct recipient of the spectator's look" (ibid).

While the lesbian spectator, in this reworking of psychoanalytic theory, has a desire to identify with the female screen image, she also sexually desires the female screen image, which is known as the object-libido. In her object-libido, the lesbian spectator may take scopophilic pleasure in the female image on the screen. Through her object-libido, the lesbian spectator's sexual desires move from her to the screen image. In "What is a Picture?" (1981), Lacan's posits that the gaze can be erotic and aggressive at the same time (107). The lesbian spectator's erotic or sexual desires function to draw in the female screen image or the "looked-at" into itself to form a kind of imaginary "sexual union" (ibid) where the distinction between ego and object becomes indeterminate. It is important to note that both Freud and Lacan theorize that both libidos/drives exist together, and it is impossible for either one to exist separately in a person's psyche. As Freud posits in "On Narcissism an Introduction" (1914), "The separation of the sexual instincts from the ego-instincts would simply reflect this twofold function of the individual" (78). Here, Freud notes that the "twofold" libido (ego and object) shows how humans can form their identities through biological determinism. In cinema, the lesbian spectator's twofold erotic (object-libido) and aggressive (ego-libido) desires underscore how the lesbian spectator's visual pleasures are playful and fluid rather than biologically or even socially inscribed. (ibid).

In "The Hypothetical Lesbian Heroine" (1990), Chris Straayer also notes that the lesbian look is not hierarchical like the male gaze, but is rather non-hierarchical since it "looks for a returning look" (n.p)[49]. He posits, "The sexual gaze as elaborated in much feminist film theory remains a male prerogative, a unidirectional gaze from male onto female, pursuing a downward slant in relation to power. In contrast, the lesbian look that I describe requires exchange. It looks

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[49] Straayer a film scholar who approaches feminist film theory from a queer (lesbian or trans-) perspective, powerfully argues for a rethinking of rigid gender binaries and sexual dichotomies.

for a returning look, not just a receiving look. It sets up two-directional sexual activity" (ibid.).

Straayer's notion that the lesbian look is a "two-directional sexual activity" is comparable to

Lacan's erotic gaze since the lesbian spectator is drawing the female character's look towards

itself (ibid). What is at stake here is the fluid, multi-directional nature of desire itself. In her essay

"Desperately Seeking Difference" (1987), Jackie Stacey notes that film theorists (with reference

to Mulvey) do not accurately analyze the duality of lesbian spectatorial desires. According to

Stacey, film theorists resort to a single desire model to understand "feminine desire" (61). This

single desire model notes that lesbian spectators either take up a spectatorial position that

sexually desires a female screen image (object-libido/erotic gaze) or identifies with the female

screen image (ego-libido/aggressive gaze). As Stacey contends, "The pleasures of this feminine

desire cannot be collapsed into simple identification, since difference and otherness are

continuously played upon…The rigid distinction between *either* desire *or* identification, so

characteristic of psychoanalytic film theory, fails to address the construction of desires which

involve a specific interplay of both processes" (61).

Although Mulvey does not address lesbian sexuality specifically, I would argue that her

theory of "masculinized" female spectators nevertheless reinforces a hierarchical, "singular"

model for understanding women's spectatorial desires that does not account for playful two-

directionality. Furthermore, Mulvey's "masculinized" female spectatorial position does not

accurately use the dualism of the libido/drives that is developed by Freud and Lacan. Instead,

Mulvey relies purely on Freud's psychosexual stages of development to show how women

spectators can either identify with the active male spectator (through the pre-Oedipal stage) or

assume a narcissistic spectatorial role by identifying with the passive female screen image

("Visual Pleasure", 19). This singular model for understanding female spectatorial desire

suggests that authoritative female sexual desires (hetero or homosexual) cannot exist without the presence of an active male character[50].

In "Personal Best: Lesbian/Feminist Audience" (1984), Chris Straayer also argues that lesbian spectatorship is misunderstood by many feminist film theorists as an alternative form of the male gaze. He posits:

> Lesbians have persistently been misassigned a male point of view by straight
>
> society. Sexual preference is confused with gender identity. Freudian and
>
> Lacanian psychology fosters this misconception by its denial of active female
>
> sexuality. Lesbians are a vulnerable target for any theory that terms activity as
>
> "phallic". One conclusion apparent from my survey of lesbian/feminist viewers
>
> is that they are not consuming sexist imagery from a male point of view
>
> (Straayer, n.p.).

In this passage, Straayer theorizes that understanding lesbian desire as a woman's masculinized disposition in the phallic stage of psychosexual development is wrong since it is heteronormative and reinforces a "denial of female sexuality" (ibid)[51]. This denial of female sexuality is evident in "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'" (1981), where Mulvey notes that

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[50] Here, it is important to acknowledge Adrienne Rich's work "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1980). Rich's work argues that heterosexuality is a political institution that reinforces patriarchy. According to Rich, lesbian existence dismantles this "heterosexual institution" that has also led to the oppression of women. As Rich notes, "*Lesbian existence* suggests both the fact of the historical presence of lesbians and our continuing creation of the meaning of that existence. I mean the term *lesbian continuum* to include a range- through each woman's life and throughout history- of woman-identified experience; not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman" (648). Rich's concepts of "lesbian existence" and "lesbian continuum" have been influential in establishing new theoretical models that reject male determination in women's gender or sexual development.

[51] Teresa De Lauretis' work *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Subjectivity and Perverse Desire* (1994) is another theoretical text that dismantles the notion that lesbian desire should be comparable to the masculine heterosexuality or a regression of the Freudian pre-Oedipal stage.

masculinized female spectatorship can only be active if it limits feminine behaviours and takes up a "phallic" gaze (39). As she posits:

> The masculine identification, in its phallic aspect, reactivates for her a fantasy
>
> of 'action' that correct femininity demands should be repressed. The fantasy of
>
> 'action' finds expression through a metaphor of masculinity. Both in the
>
> language used by Freud and in the male personifications of desire flanking the
>
> female protagonist in the melodrama, this metaphor acts as a straight-jacket,
>
> becoming itself an indicator, a litmus paper, of the problems inevitably
>
> activated by any attempt to represent the feminine in patriarchal society. The
>
> memory of the 'masculine' phase has its own romantic attraction, a last-ditch
>
> resistance, in which the power of masculinity can be used as postponement
>
> against the power of patriarchy (ibid).

In this passage, Mulvey theorizes that the only way a female spectator can gain an authoritative "phallic" looking position is to adopt a masculine position to help her situate her spectatorial desires in the "fantasy of action" (ibid). However, as discussed by other theorists the lesbian spectator does not limit or obstruct her looking by suturing her gaze to a masculinized or "phallic" perspective.[52] As I suggested above, the lesbian spectator assumes an authoritative and

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[52] Carol Clover in her article "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film," also uses the "visible adjustment in terms of gender representation (221)" in the slasher film genre to shift Mulvey's terms and analyze a male viewer who "submits himself" (217) to a feminized spectatorship experience. Clover notes that some horror films actually ask "What would it be like to be, or even seem to be (…) a woman? (217)" Since horror spectatorship is often registered as a "feminine experience," she claims there is a theatricalization of gender and a "feminization" of the audience early on in some horror and slasher films that deserves a closer look. According to Clover, the "male gaze" conventions and usual gender conventions and "gender identity game" are "too patterned (216)" or parodied in some horror flicks. She suggests that we think about horror films not in terms of male identification, but more in terms of a "last girl" who survives, although she is symbolically phallicized (219). She claims "the viewing experience hinges on the emotional assumption of the feminine posture" (220). Clover argues that there is a male brought in at the last minute, a "last-minute male" (218), in 1970s slasher films, but it is already too late... the male viewer, she holds, may give up the "last pretense of male identification" (219). By the 1980s, the male is dispensed with entirely, argues the author. See her article "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film," *Representations,* No. 20, Special Issue: Misogyny, Misandry, and Misanthropy (Autumn, 1987), pp. 187-228.

playful spectatorial position which simultaneously projects her ego-libido and the object-libido onto the female screen image.

The authoritative position of the lesbian look is also crucial for understanding whether or not it is a form of oppositional gaze that works against the heteronormative structure of Mulvey's male gaze theory. Straayer theorizes that lesbian spectatorial desires are positioned outside the "male-female polarity" and thus need to be understood as a new form of authoritative spectatorship that does not satisfy the gender binary of the male gaze. In "The Hypothetical Lesbian Heroine" (1990), Straayer posits:

> The lesbian remains outside the male-female polarity. She demonstrates a
> radical possibility for attaining subjectivity through activity which asserts
> personal meaning and is understood via similarities as much as differences…
> Lesbianism demands a new operation of subjectivity in which active desires,
> pleasures, and other specific declarations of identity, construct a field of
> multiple entry points. Within this new operations, a heterosexual woman's
> active sexuality would not be consumed but empowered." (Straayer, n.p).

In this passage, Straayer contends that lesbian sexuality presents a new form of spectatorial subjectivity that allows homosexual women to view films from "multiple entry points" (ibid). According to Straayer and others, as I suggested earlier, lesbian spectators are able to use their fluid libido/drives to look past the lure of the male gaze, identifying with and sexual desiring the female subject on screen. Thus, the lesbian look can on multiple levels be understood as oppositional to the male gaze. The lesbian look can intentionally repel the male gaze if they refuse to objectify another female on screen. In its playful multidirectionality, the lesbian look may also look past the lure of the male gaze and desire the female screen image.

We might compare the lesbian look's oppositional stance to bell hooks' concept of the oppositional gaze. In the last chapter we looked at hook's argument that black women spectators use their Black identity to reject racialized screen images. In psychoanalytic terms, both oppositional positions require a new identity that overrides the power of the heteronormative or racist filmic narrative.

To conclude this section, the multi-directionality of the libidos/drives (identification and object desire) in lesbian spectatorship are important to this project since it shows us that Mulvey's psychoanalytic understanding of sexuality does not sufficiently trouble restrictive binaries. More importantly, the fluid duality of desire in the lesbian look supports this project's hypothesis which states that spectatorship is inherently diverse and can only be understood through a modified psychoanalytic model that does not reinforce heteronormativity, cisnormativity or racism. In short, an intersectional psychoanalytic film theory is the only kind feasible for understanding spectatorship today.

In order to properly arrive at an unrestricted and fluid understanding of cinematic gazing and/or looking we must first understand how Mulvey's use of Freudian psychosexual theories reinforces performative gendered acts. In "Visual 'Drive' and Cinematic Narrative: Reading Gaze Theory in Lacan, Hitchcock, and Mulvey" (2007), Clifford Manlove posits that Mulvey's work is important in understanding how the power of patriarchy shapes classical Hollywood films, but it fails to show how patriarchal conventions reinforce repetitive gender norms. As he notes:

> While Mulvey chooses excellent cinematic examples to demonstrate the power
> of the gaze, her emphasis on the role of pleasure as the means of supporting
> that power misses the crucial role repetition plays in each film. Pleasure and

repetition work together, making the visual drive a dynamic, transgressive

power. Rather than being about active male heroes using their gazes to control

passive, "to-be-looked-at" women, *Vertigo, Rear Window,* and *Marnie* show

ambivalent, less-than-powerful heroes struggling to resist patriarchy, struggling

to wrest control of the gaze from the world around them (84).

For Manlove, Mulvey thus fails to understand how film partakes in repetitive identification

processes which could create a powerful, transgressive gaze that resists patriarchy. In order to

better understand the transgressive power of screen desire and identification (going beyond the

limitations of Mulvey's male gaze theory) in the next section of this chapter we turn to the

performative qualities of gender formation in cinematic narratives and a Butlerian critique of

Freud's Oedipal complex.

Section 3.3: Film Narratives and Gender Repetition: Butler's Performative Critique of Freudian Gender Construction

In the first chapter of this project, I briefly outlined Judith Butler's concept of gender

performativity found in her work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*

(1990). I noted that Butler's concept of gender performativity is crucial to this project on Mulvey

since it outlines a theoretical model that underscores the performative qualities of masculine and

feminine spectatorial positions. Through Butler's performative theory we can see how classical

Hollywood cinema narratives are inherently performative since they continue to reinforce

masculine and feminine gender behaviours through their repetitive presentation of the same

types of characters. In order to expand on my previous Butlerian analysis of Mulvey, I will use

this section of the chapter to critique the Freudian Oedipal complex that is instilled within

Mulvey's male gaze theory and in the production of contemporary and classical cinematic narratives[53]. By analyzing Butler's critique of the Freudian Oedipal complex we can better understand how Mulvey's psychosexual foundation to her male gaze theory is heteronormative and does not address LGBTQ+ sexualities.

In *Gender Trouble* (1990)*,* Butler disagrees with Freud's notion that the (biologically) feminine psyche of a girl causes her to be attracted to her father while the (biologically) masculine psyche of a boy results in him desiring his mother. In "Sex and Gender Through an Analytic Eye: Butler on Freud and Gender Identity" (2000)*,* Anna Gullickson highlights Butler's notion that Freud's theory on children's gender identity is wrong because it assumes that gender is "natural". She posits:

> When Freud states that dispositions are what determine which parent each
>
> child identifies with, he is claiming that there is something natural about
>
> gender. Moreover, with his theory of dispositions, Butler claims that Freud also
>
> assumes a heterosexual norm…First, in Freud's theory, no desire is "original"
>
> we do not come with certain desires in place at birth (13).

For Gullickson, Butler is right in her critique of Freud because she dismantles the biological necessity of the heteronormative binary of men desiring females and females desiring males that

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[53] In "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy of Sex'" (1975) Gayle Rubin critiques feminist film theorists who use Freudian psychoanalysis to formulate biologistic "sex/gender systems". According to Rubin a biologist sex-gender system such as found in the conventional notion of "patriarchy" wrongly sees people's sexualities as biologically determined rather than "products of human activity". She posits:
> Nevertheless, they [Freud and Lévi-Strauss] provide conceptual tools with which one can build
> descriptions of the part of social life which is the locus of the oppression of the women, of sexual
> minorities, and of certain aspects of human personality within individuals. I call that part of
> social life the 'sex/gender system', for lack of a more elegant term. As a preliminary definition, a
> 'sex/gender system' is the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality
> into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied (159).

he proposes. Furthermore, Butler believes that Freud's Oedipal complex reinforces

heteronormative values because it rejects the expression of homosexual desires in children as

active or primary. Granted, Freud suggests that before the Oedipal complex, the infant is

inherently "bisexual," but even this pre-Oedipal notion of bisexuality is skewed toward the

reestablishment of normative heterosexuality (82). As Butler puts it:

> The conceptualization of bisexuality in terms of dispositions, feminine and
>
> masculine, which have heterosexual aims as their intentional correlates,
>
> suggests that for Freud bisexuality is the coincidence of two heterosexual
>
> desires within a single psyche. The masculine disposition is, in effect never
>
> oriented toward the father as an object of sexual love, and neither is the
>
> feminine disposition oriented toward the mother (ibid).

In this passage, Butler critiques Freud's definition of bisexuality as a co-incidence of two

heterosexual dispositions within a single psyche. According to Butler, Freud's heterosexual

framework theorizes that the feminine (or receptive) part of the psyche can only be attracted to

men and the "masculine" (or active) part of the psyche can only be attracted to men. In this

sense, Freud believes that homosexuality is pathological (or not normal) since he does not

understand that masculinity and femininity are patriarchal interpretations of active and reactive

desires. Butler rejects Freud's biological theory of homosexuality and states that an active desire

can be both heterosexual or homosexual. Through her sociogenic theory on gender, Butler

believes that Freud's biological gender theory is problematic because it raises issues regarding

the internalization and identification of gender norms. As Butler states, "That the boy usually

chooses the heterosexual would, then, be the result, not of the fear of castration by the father, but

fear of castration- that is, the fear of 'feminization' associated within heterosexual cultures with

male homosexuality" (80). Here, Butler notes that a boy's understanding of femininity as a reactive part of the psyche stems from his fear of societal castration in heteronormative society[54].

In "'Sex' and the Problem of the Body: Reconstructing Judith Butler's Theory of Sex/Gender" (2007), Samuel Chambers contends that Butler's concept of gender performativity undermines the ontology of the body but suggests that bodies are inherently vulnerable to societal conditioning. As he states, "A body is both dependent upon others and subject to violation by another, by others. Through our bodies we always remain exposed to others, and our very vulnerability ties us to others. In this sense, and only in this sense, we find something primary about the body, something fundamental undeniable" (49)[55]. Chambers agrees with Butler's theory that both boy's and girl's bodies are susceptible to "castration" from society, which leads them to perform masculine and feminine behaviors in order to be considered normal. Interestingly, Butler uses the concept of gender performativity to show that both boys and girls participate in a "gender parody" since the gender they are performing does not have an origin. She states, "[The] Other who is always already a 'figure' in a double sense, so gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin. To be more precise, it is a production which, in effect- that is, in its effect-postures an imitation" (*Gender Trouble*, 188).

According to Butler, Freud's understanding of gender classification causes an individual to experience a conflict between external and internal formations of gender identity. The external

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[54] Butler's notion of "societal castration" is comparable to Eve Sedgwick's concept of "homosexual panic" found in her work *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). According to Sedgwick, homosexual panic derives in the psyche of heterosexual men who internalize homophobia that stems from heteronormative Western cultures. As Sedgwick contends, homosexual panic is "the most private, psychologized form in which many twentieth-century Western men experience their vulnerability to the social pressure of homophobic blackmail" (ibid). In this quote, Sedgwick contends that men experience a homosexual panic when they internalize the heteronormative policing of desire.
[55] Chambers notion of societal conditioning from the "other" is comparable to Sartre and Fanon's concept of "Being-for-Others which was established in the previous chapter. All three theorists suggest that the construction of our being or identity is also constructed by (our reception of) another person's consciousness of us.

is associated with the physical appearance of gender construction and the internal is an

unconscious desire to be masculine or feminine. In "Critically Queer" (1993), Butler states, "The

distinction between the 'inside' truth of femininity, considered a psychic disposition or ego-core,

and the 'outside' truth, considered as appearance or presentation, produces a contradictory

formation of gender in which no fixed truth can be established" (24). In this passage, Butler

infers that gender classification among children can be problematic because society negatively

impacts the internalization of gender identity by enforcing masculine and feminine behaviours.

This is evident in classical Hollywood cinema when filmic images reinforce masculine and

feminine gender behaviours through their characters. Filmic images reinforce an Oedipal

trajectory whereby the male spectator sexually desires the passive female screen image (which

represents his mother) and desires to identify with the active male character (which represents

his father). This cinematic Oedipal trajectory instills images of normative gendered behaviours

into spectators since men identify with the filmic father figure and unconsciously perform

masculine behaviours and women identify with the filmic mother figure and perform feminine

behaviours.

While Butler's performative theory is important in critiquing the sociogenic nature of

gender and also useful to understand queer re-enactments of gender, a trans-critique of Butler has

emerged, which argues that she does not fully account for the construction of transgender

identities and their real experiences and fails to account for "the multiple concrete ways in which

gender is regulated in everyday life" (Viviane Namaste, 20-21, as qtd in Bettcher, 2014). In

psychoanalytic terms, while she problematizes the patriarchal biologistic interpretation of sexual

object choice, she does not problematize the cisnormative biologistic interpretation of gender

identification (and indeed, Butler argues that all gender practices are imitative, although camp

and drag can become subversive through citing and parodying the imitative process). Trans-critics have argued that transgender identities should not be understood in terms of imitation, arguing that they do not conform to the masculine and feminine cisgender norms but rather reveal the contingency of the desire manifested in identification and gendering processes. In *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (1998), Jay Prosser contends that while Butler's concept of gender performativity does not explore the relationship between sex and gender when discussing transgender identities, it remains suggestive of the possibility. He posits:

> In both citations, Butler's suggestion of a possible transgendered becoming
>
> (that men may not be males and women may not be females) not only opens up
>
> a conceptual space between gender and sex and leaves sex dispensable to the
>
> process of gendering; it also conveys that gender is not a teleological narrative
>
> of ontology at all, with the sexed body (female) as recognizable beginning and
>
> gender identity (woman) as clear-cut ending (29).

In this passage, Prosser opens up Butler's concept of gender performativity, suggesting that it could allow for nuanced ways of not only understanding the contingency of sexual object choice but also the contingency of the relationship between the body and gender. Prosser believes that biological sex does not determine the gender which is formed through imitation. Furthermore, Prosser proposes that Butler needs to separate the notion of gender expression and the construction of gender identity. Distinguishing these two binaries would allow Butler to explore gender performativity beyond cisgender construction. As Posser argues, Butler's concept of gender performativity infers that transgender desires disrupt the easy identificatory processes of gender and sexuality (homosexual and heterosexual).

In his thesis *Non-Binary Performativity: A Trans-Positive Account of Judith Butler's Queer Theory* (2017), Toby Finlay contends that transgender identities experience violence within heteronormative societies because they forced to confirm to either heterosexual or homosexual systems in theoretical discourses. As he states:

> However, accepting identity categorization within this framework can also be perceived as violent when we understand that 'improper gender tends to become allied with inhumanity' such that claiming a trans identity can constitute an unlivable constraint over life. Accordingly, critical transgender scholars argue that revolutionary queer theory and praxis cannot continue to adhere to the mechanisms of gender identification advanced within the heterosexual matrix. Self-determination is, then, reframed from a means for trans and non-binary people to assert our gender identities to a political movement to dissolve the notion of gender identity itself (67).

In this passage, Finlay posits that the theoretical models that restrict transgender identities have caused transgender identities to use their own experiences to "dissolve the notion of gender identity" (ibid). Building on Finlay's important point about dissolving the straightjacket of gender identity, one could argue that neither Butler nor Mulvey articulate theoretical models *of* gender formation that fully account for transgender identities who reject cisnormative conventions that are reinforced in society or cinema. To more fully address this, the next section of this chapter will provide a closer analysis of theories of transgender spectators and characters who disrupt cisnormative and heteronormative cinematic conventions.

Section 3.4: The Transgender Gaze/Look

In the first chapter of this project I briefly discussed Jack Halberstam's cinematic theories of transgender characters in his work *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005). According to Halberstam, transgender cinematic characters challenge preexisting gendered filmic conventions since they possess a gaze/look that is not restricted to a gender binary. Through their gaze/look, transgender characters are able to create cinematic narratives that are neither heteronormative nor cisnormative[56]. Although the transgender gaze/look is decoupled from these cultural norms it nevertheless engages with spectators in diverse ways. According to Halberstam, the relationship between spectators and transgender characters is diverse and can lead to different spectatorial identificatory processes and sexual desires. As I noted in the first chapter, Halberstam states:

> The recent explosion of transgender films forces us to consider what the
> spectacle of the transgender body represents to multiple audiences. For some
> audiences, the transgender body confirms a fantasy of fluidity so common to
> notions of transformation within the postmodern. To others, the transgender
> body confirms the enduring power of the binary gender system. But to still
> other viewers, the transgender body represents a utopian vision of a world of
> subcultural possibilities (96).

In this quote, Halberstam theorizes that the transgender cinematic character can interact with a spectator in multiple ways; however, I would like to focus on the concept of fantasy first. Halberstam theorizes that the transgender body on screen can present a "fantasy of fluidity" to

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[56] Halberstam conflates his concept of the transgender gaze and look in *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005) and *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability* (2018). Thus, I refer to his concept as the transgender gaze/look.

spectators (ibid). The transgender body as a figure of cinematic fantasy can be read against Mulvey's concept of "fascination" in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975). It is important to note that fantasy and fascination are two psychological concepts that function in the cinematic spectator's psyche differently. Halberstam implies that fantasy is an unrestrictive trait in the psyche and notes that the transgender cinematic identity is a fantasy of fluidity since it works to destabilize the spectator's "sense of self" and "gender stability" (89). In comparison, Mulvey defines fascination, in filmic terms, as a controlled form of visual attraction to screen images. Furthermore, Mulvey believes that classical Hollywood films fascinate spectators by controlling their desires. As I have noted in the first chapter, Mulvey posits, "This paper intends to use psychoanalysis to discover where and how the fascination of film is reinforced by pre-existing patterns of fascination already at work within the individual subject and the social formations that have moulded him" (14). In this passage, Mulvey theorizes that classical Hollywood cinema uses "social formations" (which can also be understood as gender and sexual conventions) to fascinate and control the spectator and their desires (ibid). In comparison, the oppositional gaze/look of a transgender character, according to Halberstam, does not reinforce preexisting gender or sexual cinematic conventions, but rather allows for more fluid encounter with filmic narratives where spectators are able to use their sexual fantasies to construct their spectatorial desires.

As stated earlier, Halberstam theorizes that the transgender body interacts with cinematic spectators by "confirming the enduring power of the binary gender system" (96). Here, Halberstam believes that the presence of a transgender character on screen underscores the artificiality of cisnormative gender formation. However, Halberstam believes that these

transgender characters should not be understood as non-normative bodies that are at odds with a

normative body, rather, they need to be understood as bodies that

> are fragmentary and internally contradictory, bodies that remap gender and its
>
> relations to race, place, class, and sexuality, bodies that are in pain or that
>
> represent a play of surfaces, bodies that sound different than they look, bodies
>
> that represent palimpsestic relations to identity-means finding different visual,
>
> aural, and haptic codes through which to figure the experience of being in a
>
> body ("Trans* Representation", 89).

Thus, transgender characters do not only show the performative qualities of cisnormative gender

construction, they also exhibit different "visual, aural, and haptic codes" for spectators to identify

with (ibid).

According to Halberstam, transgender characters introduce a new perceptual language

and possess a gaze/look that unfastens gender or sexual conventions in screen images ("The

Transgender Look", 78). Through the transgender gaze/look, spectators are able to view a

cinematic narrative without being confined to heteronormative or cisnormative gendered

cinematic conventions. In his dissertation, *Crossdressing Cinema: An Analysis of Transgender

Representation in Film* (2012), Jeremy Miller summarizes Halberstam's transgender gaze theory

stating:

> The primary contribution made by developing these transgender gazes is the
>
> idea that the gaze can be a method of presenting visual information in film
>
> without being connected to an identity position…The male gaze argues that
>
> films are constructed to look at characters, primarily women, from a
>
> heteronormative male point of view. Halberstam views the gaze in this

manner; his transgender gaze is about the audience adopting a gaze that exists

outside of the gender binary (242).

As Miller notes, the transgender gaze/look causes the cisgendered spectator to "adopt" a

spectatorial gaze that is not their own. Thus, the transgender gaze/look is comparable to the

oppositional gaze since it allows spectators to regain viewing authority without a gendered

binary system. Unlike the male gaze that is traceable through its heteronormative and

cisnormative lure, the transgender gaze is untraceable since it "depends on complex relations in

time and space between seeing and not seeing, appearing and disappearing, knowing and not

knowing" ("The Transgender Look", 78). Through these "complex relations", the transgender

gaze/look can intentionally or unintentionally place spectators into an oppositional role that

showcases the artificiality of cisgender cinematic conventions (ibid). According to Halberstam,

transgender films present point-of-view shots that allow spectators to merge their gaze with the

transgender character's gaze/look[57]. He posits, "In a second mode that involves embedding

several ways of looking into one, the film deploys certain formal techniques to give the viewer

access to the transgender gaze in order to allow us to look *with* the transgender character instead

of *at* him" (ibid). Since the transgender gaze does not reinforce a gender or sexual binary a

cisgendered men and women who adopt the gaze/look can freely identify and desire with filmic

images without being restricted by the male gaze[58]. Furthermore, this **"unfastened"** form of

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[57] In "The Transgender Look", Halberstam also discusses the issue of "rewind[ing]" in cinematic narratives which is used to "gender" transgender characters on screen (78). Halberstam theorizes that technological intervention limits the "linear narrative" that the transgender look/gaze provides. This differs from Mulvey's work *Death 24x A Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (2006) which states that technological intervention is beneficial to all spectators. According to Mulvey, technology allows spectators to pause and repeat moments in film which allows them to gain authority in their visual pleasures (166).

[58] It is important to note that Halberstam's theory of the transgender gaze/look does not specifically address the visual pleasures of transgender spectators. In "Revisitation: A Trans Phenomenology of the Media Image" (2016), queer theorist Cael Keegan notes that Halberstam's transgender gaze theory is similar to Mulvey's male gaze theory since it does not directly explore the desires of queer and/or transgender spectators. He posits, "While Halberstam successfully illustrates the shortsightedness of dominant psychoanalytic and feminist film criticism that does not

gazing allows spectators to use their identificatory desire (ego-libido) and sexual desire (object-libido) to interact with screen images in alternative and unpredictable ways. In his chapter "Trans* Representation" found in *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability* (2018), Halberstam analyzes the transgender gaze/look in Kimberly Pierce's film *Boys Don't Cry* (1999). In his analysis, Halberstam notes that Brandon Teena's transgender body "not only asks that we slow down the lightening-fast calculations by which we assign genders to bodies, but also stalls systems of signification that attach masculinity to maleness, femininity to femaleness leaving nothing behind" (94). Brandon Teena's filmic transgender gaze/look rejects the rigid gender binary system that Mulvey's theory takes for granted. Furthermore, Freud's psychosexual theories on femininity as reactive and masculinity as active do not apply to spectators who desire through the transgender gaze/look. Not restricted by any gender binaries, the transgender gaze/look give the spectator the freedom to identify or sexually desire the transgender character, desire another character or not desire any cinematic images.

All forms of gazing and looking acknowledged in this chapter have shown how cinematic spectatorship is diverse and heterogeneous, not fixed and restricted. In finally looking to a spectatorial model that explores cinematic gazing as fully fluid/free, a more inclusive, intersectional model and cinematic gaze/look that could encompass all spectatorial positions (different genders, race or sexual orientations), the next section of this project will explore Vivian Sobchack's phenomenological film theory.

Section 3.5: Toward A Fluid Phenomenological Cinematic Gaze/Look

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acknowledge the existence of queer and/or trans viewers, his theory of the transgender gaze repeats the same problematic in Mulvey's formulation- it does not theorize a transgender spectator" (61).

In this final section, I will argue that revisiting Mulvey's theory of the male gaze through the complimentary lens of a phenomenological approach would allow future researchers to more fully address how films and cinematic spectators are two separate "living bodies" that engage with each other physically and psychologically[59]. This notion that films and spectators are two separate "living bodies" is exemplified in Vivian Sobchack's phenomenological film theory in *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (1992)[60]. In her work, Sobchack posits that films and spectators are two "living" bodies since both possess their own "perceptive activities" and are both capable of being subjective (217). According to Sobchack, the "living" body of the spectator and the film interact with each other through their "perceptive activities" (ibid). As she states, "Both the film's body and the spectator's body are implicated in their respective perceptive activity, enable it, and allow it expression in the world. Both the film's body and the spectator's body intend their perception *coterminously*, and both also express their perception as lived *introceptively*" (217). In this passage, Sobchack theorizes that the visual interaction between a spectator and a film is non-hierarchical since both bodies engage in a perceptive relationship that is "*coterminous"* (ibid). Thus, a phenomenological analysis of film does not focus on the ideological functions or the illusionary qualities of cinematic narratives but rather prioritizes the reflexive and adaptive qualities of spectatorial bodies and film bodies. In this sense, the spectator is not only free to interpret the film as they wish but their creative interpretations also make a demand on the film to become otherwise. Stemming from this, a phenomenological fluid gaze/look that dialogues in interesting ways with Mulvey's feminist

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[59] In "Film" (2009), Elena del Río posits that a phenomenological analysis of film as a "living body" allows theorists to understand that, "the film's body – its technological and instrumental dimension – forms the basis for the films perceptual and expressive engagement with the world" (110). This is comparable to a spectator's "lived" body which forms its "perceptual and expressive engagement with the world" through its own cultural values.

[60] It is important to acknowledge that Sobchack was not the first theorist to turn to a phenomenology-inspired film theory that does not focus on biology. Merleau-Ponty's work "Phenomenology of Perception" (1962) proceeded Sobchack's work, but is limited in analyzing spectatorial bodies that are not white heterosexual men.

critique and call for a counter-cinema, hooks' Black critique etc. is a gaze/look that makes demands upon the filmic message. Films have to change in light of the creative interpretations of the oppositional or negotiating spectators.

For example, Mulvey's feminist critique of classical Hollywood cinema does call for a "counter cinema" and underscores how patriarchal cinematic conventions in classical Hollywood cinema need to change. While Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) essay is limited in its analysis of LGBTQ+ and Black spectatorial desires, in her early essay she does briefly turn to the important experimental terrain of "radical filmmakers" and a counter-cinema to argue that future cinematic narratives need to reject patriarchal cinematic narratives in order to arrive at a more fluid cinematic gaze. Mulvey notes that counter-cinema works by, "free[ing] the look of the camera into its materiality in time and space and the look of the audience into dialectics and passionate detachment" (27). In this passage, Mulvey posits that counter-cinema can "detach" itself from the ideological function of the male gaze by "free[ing] the look of the camera" and the look of the "audience" member (ibid)[61]. Mulvey's feminist critique of patriarchal cinema finally embraces a phenomenological fluid gaze/look since it empowers the creative interpretations of a new fluid and free camera that would restrict the ideological function of patriarchal cinematic narratives.

As shown in the second chapter, bell hooks' oppositional gaze theory states that Black women spectators can use their own socio-political experiences and lived experiences to critically interpret and interrupt a white supremacist film image. In this example, the Black woman's "oppositional spectatorship" or "oppositional gaze" stems from their rejection of racist

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[61] An example of counter-cinema is Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's essay film, *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977). This avant-garde essay film plays with both the camera's point-of-view and the spectator's look to destabilize the cinematic narrative and the power of the male gaze.

ideologies that are embedded in a director's visual message. In "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" (1992), hooks theorizes that a Black woman spectator's oppositional gaze derives from their ability to "actively resist the imposition of dominant ways of knowing and looking" (128). In this sense, the creative interpretation of the oppositional Black female spectator to look at a cinematic narrative through a political lens denies the film racialized power. Hooks' oppositional gaze theory in a sense is predicated on a phenomenological fluidity since it rejects pre-existing white supremacist cinematic conventions and allows Black women to use their own experiences and political beliefs to interpret cinematic narratives in their own way.

In this chapter, I have argued that LGBTQ+ spectatorial gazes/looks are diverse and should be understood through a multi-directional framework. For example, the lesbian spectator's fluid sexuality allows her to look at a female character on screen and identify with (ego-libido) and/or take scopophiliac pleasure (object-libido) in the screen image. Thus, the lesbian spectator (along with other LGBTQ+ spectators) "remain outside the male-female polarity" which enable them to creatively interpret cinematic narratives through their own desires (The Hypothetical Lesbian Heroine", n.p.). LGBTQ+ spectatorial gazing productively utilizes phenomenological fluidity to limit heteronormative and/or cisnormative filmic conventions and patriarchal power.

In "Questions of Embodied Difference: Film and Queer Phenomenology" (2012), Kathrina Lindner posits that a phenomenological understanding of cinema does not reject preexisting gaze theories (Mulvey, hooks, Halberstam) but rather "complement[s] existing theories" in order to understand how spectators possess diverse "expressive and perceptive qualities" (n.p.). Linder argues:

Phenomenological approaches to film are useful in that, rather than strictly

opposing approaches based on optical vision, distance, and 'the gaze', they

complement existing theories. From a phenomenological perspective, it is

the body with its expressive and perceptive qualities that constitutes the

necessary condition for looking, identification, emotions and pleasure. After

all, it is the material body that makes looking and other sensory

engagements with the world (including cinema) possible in the first place

(ibid).

By understanding film and spectatorship as two "living bodies" with their own "expressive and

perceptive qualities", film theorists could use phenomenology to articulate a new intersectional

and fluid gaze theory model that radically opens up the Lacanian or Freudian psychoanalytic

framework (ibid). As shown, a more fluid understanding of spectatorial desire and a more fluid

phenomenological gaze denies the fixity of the dominant hegemonic demands of sexist, racist,

homophobic cinematic narratives, since the spectator is able to interpret the cinematic gaze/look

in ways in which the director may not have intended. In this sense, the interpretive freedom of

the oppositional or negotiated gazes/looks mentioned lead to diverse and creative spectatorial

interpretations. The multiple directions and perspectives and the diverse creative interpretations

possible in cinematic spectatorship shows us that spectatorial desires are "adrift," meaning that

they are not psychologically fixed to dominant hegemonic cinematic conventions. As I noted in

the second chapter, hooks posits that white spectators who view a Black feminist film (like

Daughters of the Dust (1991) are "adrift without a presence in the film", meaning that the

ideological function of the Black feminist cinematic narrative can not be overcoded by white

hegemony or the dominant hierarchy of the white spectator's visual pleasures ("The Oppositional

Gaze: Black Female Spectators", 130)). The non-hierarchical perceptive or relationship between the spectator and screen image I explored in this thesis is, in a sense, perfected by the fluid phenomenological gaze/look. Sobchack reflects on this non-hierarchical relationship between a spectator's body and film's own materiality and states that, "The film shares the theater with us as we share the existential structure of perception and a world with it" (*The Address of the Eye,* 218). A phenomenologically-informed more fluid gaze/look theory that dovetails with the new intersectional psychoanalytical film theory I have championed in this thesis would not be founded on a hierarchical psychic relationship between spectator and dominant hegemonic filmic conventions, but instead would derive from a "shar[ed] structure of perception" where all spectatorial desires are "adrift" and gazes/looks are fluid without restraints or restrictions.

To conclude, this project only scratches the surface in gesturing towards a new intersectional fluid/free theory of cinematic gazing. I believe that a phenomenological reevaluation of Mulvey's male gaze theory could indeed be useful in articulating, as Mulvey herself acknowledges in *Afterimages*, how "cinema has moved from a technological straightjacket into a lived flexibility" (255).

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