

**UNDER HER EYE: EXAMINING THE FEMALE GAZE IN  
'THE HANDMAID'S TALE'**

by

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The male gaze has been the dominant perspective through which most visual media have been constructed and illustrated throughout the history of the motion picture. This is due to the fact that men have largely dominated positions of creative authority on film and television sets. However, in recent years, a small number of female-driven, female-centric quality television shows have sparked conversation in the media for their unique portrayal of the female perspective. The media is calling this perspective "the female gaze." However, unlike Laura Mulvey's male gaze theory, a female gaze theory has not yet been established in the media or in academia. My thesis examines the formal conventions and theoretical implications of a female gaze through the detailed comparison of gendered perspectives in quality television.

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## Introduction

In a 2017 *Los Angeles Times* article, the Hulu original television series *The Handmaid's Tale* appeared in a discussion of the female gaze. The author, Meredith Blake, uses details from a rape scene from the show's first episode to describe the visual alienation of a central male character. After describing the scene's formal elements, Blake claims that 21st-century television is the "birthplace of the female gaze" (Blake, 2017). While media journalism is beginning to write about this concept in regards to the production of new content, scholarly discourse surrounding a female gaze has focused primarily on female reception of visual media, opposed to focusing on the conventions and process of females crafting the female perspective behind the scenes. I argue that this is because there is, and has historically been, a relative lack of visual media content produced by female creators compared to the expansive body of work produced by men. This lack of content is attributed to a relative lack of females in above-the-line positions of creative authority such as writers, directors, and directors of photography. However, a recent explosion of original content is opening more doors for female writers and directors, which has resulted in more shows "turning women into the subject of action rather than the object of desire" (Blake, 2017). While this may be true, the discussion of a female gaze has not yet been concretely defined in journalism or in scholarship and until the conventions of the female gaze have been clearly identified, its definition will remain unclear. A deeper exploration of the female gaze is necessary in order to craft a clear definition for the benefit of precision in critical

discourse. In my thesis, I will formally analyze a scene from *The Handmaid's Tale* along with a scene from *Game of Thrones* to compare their treatment of female characters and pinpoint differences between their representations of gendered perspectives. Based upon my observations and Laura Mulvey's male gaze theory, I will then craft a definition of the female gaze as its own entity.

The male gaze theory was first defined in 1975 by film theorist Laura Mulvey in her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." This breakthrough text became widely known among feminist film theorists, and her ideas are still being dissected and critiqued today. As film reporter Alicia Malone puts it, Mulvey was simply interested in what happens to women when most of the films we watch are made by men and seen through the male gaze. (Malone, 9). In simple terms, the male gaze encompasses a way of viewing visual media from the perspective of a white heterosexual male. Mulvey's theory established the male as an active "looker" or the one who possesses the power of looking, while the female was established as the passive object or spectacle (Mulvey). In feminist film scholarship, theorists have explored the notion of a female gaze in regards to spectatorship, but they have yet to clearly define this type of gaze in regards to production. Though in the past and present there has been a small number of female movie makers in American cinema who have fashioned alternative perspectives to the male gaze, there is still a lack of consensus among creatives and scholars as to what the female gaze in production truly is, and whether or not it exists yet. Productions were, and still are mostly composed of male creators, which influences the manner in which these stories

are constructed as well as the style in which they are communicated. As Mulvey observes, classical Hollywood cinema crafted a visual machinery catered toward male desire. Statistically, the number of men in creative higher-up roles still far outweighs the number of women in these positions (Lauzen, 12). Compared to the film industry, the television industry allows for a wider variety of representations and creative contributions on screen and off (Collins). However, upon the arrival of social movements and more efforts for gender equality, there has been a positive shift in the demand for female-driven content in the television industry. This shift has opened more creative avenues for female directors and writers resulting in a growing number of television shows that are turning women into the subjects of action rather than the objects of desire. As a result, the question of whether or not there is a female gaze is being explored by media scholars and journalists.

Since Mulvey's conception of the male gaze theory, the female gaze has been defined more by what it is not than what it is (Benson-Allott, 65). In the theoretical discourse of the female gaze, one finds a more robust scholarly landscape in regards to female spectatorship. Due to the comparative lack of female driven content involving women in above the line creative roles, there is also a relative lack of theoretical discourse exploring the female gaze as it relates to production. Stylistic and narrative techniques of a female gaze remain ambiguous. This brings into question the purpose and functionality of a female gaze and whether or not it is directly opposite to the male gaze. Some female cinematographers argue that the notion of a female gaze is more complex than



simply reversing gender roles and swapping power dynamics (Telfer, 2018). Additionally, there has been pushback in the media against the use of “the female gaze” as a blanket term to define all female-motivated visual content. A primary issue with the use of the phrase “female gaze” is the difference between its understanding and its application. Alina Cohen comments on this mismatch saying, “Most likely because ‘male gaze’ was first used within the realm of cinema, these attempts to reckon with the ‘female gaze’ are similarly confined, which is inconsistent with the more expansive way that the term is often used” (Cohen). Based on these attitudes toward the female gaze, how, then, is the female gaze different from the male gaze, and what formal elements define its visual language?

The unconventional, female-centric visual and narrative style of *The Handmaid's Tale* was established by a female cinematographer, Reed Morano, who was the director and executive producer for the first three episodes of the show. Morano worked closely with the show's male cinematographer, Colin Watkinson, to establish and maintain the show's visual language throughout. Morano dictated the visual style of the famous ceremony scene in *The Handmaid's Tale* in which Offred is raped. However, instead of showing a voyeuristic point of view, the cinematography lingers primarily on the main character's (Offred's) face, highlighting emotional details and shaping the viewer's experience. The frequency with which shallow focus and extreme close up shots are used shows a more focused attention on the facial expression of the female protagonist and tailors “the look” to emphasize detailed emotion.

This perspective is different from more conventional male gaze perspectives as seen in shows like HBO's *Game of Thrones* in which women are typically dehumanized by the camera's fragmentation of their bodies. The stylistic divergence from male gaze conventions prompts the reconfiguration of female gaze theory. I argue that the formal elements of visual storytelling from a female perspective exist to prompt a different engagement with the media text altogether. If the visual conventions between a male and female gaze differ, the purpose of each gaze must also be analyzed. Using the gender binary logic that Mulvey used in the construction of the male gaze theory, I will argue that the female gaze does not exist solely to objectify the opposite sex for the purpose of eliciting pleasure. Rather, its focus and purpose are empathetic, placing close attention to the emotions and actions of the central character. Closely examining trends in female driven visual stories will inform a reconfiguration of female gaze theoretical framework.

To shape the defining framework of a female gaze, there must be an understanding of contemporary feminism in regards to visual culture. Amelia Jones explains that "feminism has long acknowledged that visibility (the conditions of how we see and make meaning of what we see) is one of the key modes by which gender is culturally inscribed in Western culture" (Jones, 1). Thus, studying contemporary visual culture can inform our current understanding of representations of gender. Jones adds:

Feminism is one of the ways in which we can most usefully come to an understanding of the image culture in which we are

suspended...Visual culture as a category of objects or images, or as a mode or strategy of interpretation, is always already determined in and through relations of sexual difference; it has offered some of the most useful possibilities for the development of a feminist model of critical cultural analysis. (3)

Reading visual texts with a feminist lens can illuminate both progressive and regressive trends and can inform the critique of current feminist film and television theory. Additionally, if the visual trends of a female perspective can be identified, this will help in the development of a female gaze theory which can serve as its own entity and not one that is derivative of the male gaze.

Furthermore, when considering the limits of Mulvey's argument, if the female gaze differs intrinsically from the male gaze, should its definition consider a broader range of female perspectives? I aim to inspire conversation about the theoretical binary logic surrounding the male vs. female gaze. Categorizing the 'female gaze' as 'female' implies a binary way of thinking and disregards the principles of feminism. Similarly, many female critics and female artists avoid using the female gaze as simply an opposition to the male gaze, and aim to view female work on a case by case basis (Telfer). Approaching the application of the female gaze in this way allows for the consideration of female intersectionality, and therefore deconstructs a binary notion of competing gazes such as male vs. female. Using logic from alternative gaze theories, a less sectional and more inclusive definition of the female gaze can be defined. I argue that if the female gaze does not function to directly oppose male gaze

conventions, the female gaze should consider intersectionality and exist as an alternative gaze which does not perpetuate a binary framework. Additionally, by expanding the definition of the female gaze, the concept can exist as its own theoretical entity, and not simply as an extension of the male gaze. This will contribute to the precision of theoretical vernacular as it relates to film and television industries.

## **Relevance**

The number of women working in above-the-line positions on television shows today is dramatically less relative to the number of men. To contextualize the scarcity of shows made by women, I will provide statistical percentages to reflect the status of the television industry's gender disparity. Furthermore, this will emphasize how rare the female gaze is, due to the significantly low percentage of female directors of photography. Secondly, I will perform a formal analysis of two scenes from contemporary popular quality television shows. In my formal analysis, I will be closely examining the cinematographic details of *The Handmaid's Tale* since it has been identified in the media as a show that employs a female gaze in popular culture. I will identify how the show uses the cinematography to convey a primary feminine perspective, and will determine how the visual style compares to the conventions of the male gaze. Then, I will compare the visual style to that of another contemporary quality television show, *Game of Thrones*, which employs a more conventional visual style associated with the male gaze. This step will illuminate differences between the

visual styles, and will help identify any specific trends of a female gaze. I will uncover questions about how the female gaze is employed and how it navigates through cinematic form. Then, I will use the theoretical structure of the male gaze as a base to project the functionality and expand upon the theoretical makeup of the female gaze. As more female-generated works of visual media culture are popularized, it is especially important to develop a structure to a more robust female gaze theory for the vitality and fairness of critical discourse. I argue that female-led and female-centric work deserves to be criticized on its own and not simply as an opposition to the expansive body of work dominated by the male gaze perspective. Lastly, incorporating critiques of the original male gaze theory, I will apply an intersectional approach, situating the female gaze as an alternative to the male gaze, and not simply an opposite in a binary context. The nature of the male gaze functions on the idea of binary thinking. Structuring a female gaze theory to be more inclusive, or to be thought of as an alternative gaze, would not discourage the structured criticism of work created by and through non-binary identities.

## **Background**

Mulvey bases her theory on the principle of masculinity as the dominant, and femininity as the subordinate. The overrepresentation of the male gaze as the dominant perspective establishes a power structure in cinema and visual media that follow its conventions. Thus the male gaze in visual culture is given more agency because of its normality. Furthermore, Mulvey argues that the

woman is never truly allowed to be the subject and is reduced to an object to fulfill the voyeuristic and fetishistic tendencies of men.

Mulvey starts her argument by identifying and deconstructing the notion of pleasure in cinema. She relies on Freudian theory of sexuality to explain how scopophilia is a source of pleasure. Scopophilia is defined as instinct that exists as an erotic basis for the pleasure found in looking at another person as an object (Mulvey, 60). Desire is communicated through the construction of scopophilia in visual media. The subject of this desire establishes a power imbalance between the looker and the one who is receiving the look. Mulvey argues that the world is ordered by sexual imbalance and observes the pleasure in looking has been catered to accommodate the male particularly in films (Mulvey, 62). Through the language and structure of visual media, which was in Mulvey's case classical Hollywood cinema, a dichotomy has been established between men and women, with men being the active drivers of the plot whereas women are viewed as passive objects that halt the progression of the narrative. According to Mulvey, women in their traditional exhibitionist roles are "simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*" (Mulvey, 62). The woman becomes her own commodified image to be looked at for the pleasurable benefit of the man. The patterns of adjustable cinematic conventions establish an idea that a woman on screen is an erotic object of the gaze of the presumed male spectator and the onscreen male surrogate, and that the role of the woman is passive in the narrative. Most

of these cinematic conventions stem from the relationship between the artist and their seeing eye: the camera. Since the male perspective is being represented in both the construction, execution, and reception of the male gaze, it is viewed as the dominant and default perspective through which media is created.

The camera, as Mulvey explains, “becomes the mechanism for producing an illusion of Renaissance space, flowing movements compatible with the human eye, an ideology of representation that revolves around the perception of the subject; the camera’s look is disavowed in order to create a convincing world in which the spectator’s surrogate can perform with verisimilitude” (Mulvey, 68). The camera becomes the extension of the creator’s eye, therefore limiting what the spectator can see to this view alone. The cinematic conventions of the male gaze in Mulvey’s argument include slow panning movements and fragmentation of the female figure to communicate that the female is an object of desire, and to establish the power of the male as the observer and the builder of that particular kind of desire. Mulvey comments on this relationship saying, “Camera technology (as exemplified by deep focus in particular) and camera movements (determined by the action of the protagonist), combined with invisible editing (demanded by realism) all tend to blur the limits of screen space. The male protagonist is free to command the stage, a stage of spatial illusion in which he articulates the look and creates the action” (Mulvey, 63). Using the camera to fragment women’s bodies is one way the male gaze functions to exploit women and objectify them.

Another key point in the construction of Mulvey's argument is the role of women in the narrative. The inclusion of a woman in the narrative becomes an element of spectacle and detracts from the overall narrative progression in narrative film. In Mulvey's words, the woman's "visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation. This alien presence then has to be integrated into cohesion with the narrative" (Mulvey 62). The representation of women as erotic objects that freeze the progression of the plot leads Mulvey to her point about spectatorship. Mulvey argues that crafting representations of women in this way had a direct effect on audiences as well. Not only do women as they are portrayed function as erotic objects for the characters within the screen story, but they act as erotic objects for the spectator (Mulvey, 62). The gaze of the spectator assumes the gaze of the looker within the film, which is carefully crafted and manipulated by the creators of the body of work. Mulvey comments on the transmission of the male gaze to the spectator saying, "As the spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he projects his look on to that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence" (Mulvey, 63). The coalescence of the male gaze, as Mulvey conceptualizes it, happens seamlessly and is initiated through the objectification and performance of the woman. The sexual impact of the performer, which most often happens to be a woman, temporarily transports the film as it is viewed into a different space outside of its own (Mulvey, 62). Exploring the spectator aspects of the male gaze is crucial to the understanding



of how modern day instances of both the male and female gaze can impact different audiences.

The notion of a female gaze has been commonly applied to situations that explore viewing strategies and that involve studying female spectatorship. The nature of the discussion surrounding the female gaze often disregards its function in production, and instead invests in exploring its passive, spectator side. Some would argue that the female gaze does not or can not exist as it relates to production. This is because the male gaze reflects and articulates the perspective of not only the male individual, but also the broader patriarchal society. Statistically more men rise to positions of creative authority in the world of television production, thus the male perspective continues to saturate the market (Lauzen).

Since the publishing of Mulvey's argument, many film theorists have critiqued Mulvey's theory of the male gaze for neglecting to discuss the female spectator in the male gaze theory. The exclusion of a female gaze upon the arrival of the male gaze theory sparked conversation mostly about female spectatorship theory. Feminist film theorist Mary Ann Doane observes the implications of the cinematic image in regards spectatorial desire in a more contemporary setting. She notes that, like in the history of cinema, "spectatorial desire, in contemporary film theory, is generally delineated as either voyeurism or fetishism, as precisely a pleasure in seeing what is prohibited in relation to the female body" (Doane, 133). The images of women still orchestrate a gaze, or what Doane considers to be a "limit" that contains a pleasurable value

(Doane, 133). She states that a woman's beauty and desirability "becomes a function of certain practices of imaging - framing, lighting, camera movement, angle" (Doane, 133). The implications of a woman's beauty and desirability being shown in this way influences the reception of her image. Thus, the woman, or the female character, is more associated with the surface image rather than her illusory depths. Doane argues that the female spectator while viewing another woman on screen must adopt one of two masculine positions which include "the masochism of over-identification or the narcissism entailed in becoming one's own object of desire, in assuming the image in the most radical way" (Doane, 143). Doane also expands on the problems with a female gaze saying that a simple role reversal still reinforces the dominant system of aligning sexual difference with a subject/object dichotomy (Doane, 134).

While considering the female gaze, it is important to contextualize it within existing feminist television theories. Caetlin Benson-Allott writes about the female gaze in the context of contemporary television saying "women-led serials have been getting a lot of attention lately for bringing 'the female gaze' to the small screen" (Benson-Allott, 65). She notes that Jill Soloway has defined the female gaze as "an intersectional gaze" and "a sociopolitical justice-demanding way of art making" (Benson-Allott, 65). However, Benson-Allott argues that the female gaze, since it was first invoked by its exclusion from Mulvey's male gaze theory, is more so defined currently as what it is not or what it is not associated with (Benson-Allott, 65). Of the female gaze, she states:

It is not the male gaze, the patriarchal organization of film language and narrative for heterosexual male pleasure. Nor can it simply denote female directors, writers, producers, or cinematographers, since women have proven just as capable of manufacturing sexist media as men. Some of the women-helmed, female-driven dramas on TV today do offer compelling examples of television embracing feminist principles, but as for the female gaze... 'there really is no such thing not yet'. (65)

I argue that even though some claim there is no female gaze yet, there needs to be a more developed understanding of how it can be characterized. A more robust female gaze definition can act not only as a device through which visual media are created, received, and criticized, but it can also serve as a political tool to challenge the dominant male gaze.

### **Industry Context**

Statistical information on the television industry will help provide context for the rarity of the female gaze. Women have been historically underrepresented in higher-up creative positions both in film and television production. However, women have been especially underrepresented in one creative role in particular, director of photography. The Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University has been recording female representation for the past 21 years. This project includes the

most comprehensive historical record of women's on screen portrayals and behind-the-scenes employment. They considered all individuals working behind-the-scenes on drama, comedy, and reality programs appearing on broadcast networks, premium cable channels, and streaming services from September 2017 through May of 2018. During this television season, the study tracked 4,833 characters and 5,195 behind-the-scenes credits (Lauzen, 6). During this time, across all platforms, women represented 40% of all producers, 26% of executive producers, 25% of writers, 24% of editors, 22% of creators, 17% of directors, and 3% of directors of photography (Lauzen, 4). Additionally, when exclusively examining women in behind-the-scenes roles working on television streaming programs, the study found that women comprised 3% of directors of photography (Lauzen, 12). Overall, "98% of the programs had no women directors of photography, 90% had no women directors, 81% had no women editors, 66% had no women writers, 63% had no women creators, and 29% had no women executive producers, and 22% had no women producers" (Lauzen, 12). Furthermore, the study holistically examined other effects of female employment across all platforms of television. It found that programs with at least one woman creator had higher percentages of women directors, writers, and editors than programs with exclusively male creators (Lauzen, 15). Women are considerably less common in the role of director of photography. This role is especially crucial to the establishment of any given show's visual style as well as the illustration of character perspective. This statistic in particular can help explain why the female gaze, relative to the male gaze, lacks

an equal theoretical backbone, especially as it relates to the production of visual media.

### **Background on the Shows**

Both of the television shows I am analyzing are adaptations of written works. HBO's *Game of Thrones* is based off of the bestselling fantasy five-book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* written by George R. R. Martin. The series was originally published in 1996 and was adapted in 2007 by David Benioff and D.B. Weiss. The show itself consists of eight seasons with roughly ten episodes per season. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is a fictional dystopian novel which was published in 1985. The story was adapted into the television show by creator Bruce Miller, and acquired by Hulu in late 2016. The show is currently in production for its third season, consisting of ten episodes per season. Both shows include episodes which are fifty minutes to one hour long in runtime. I am choosing to compare these two shows based on their popularity in contemporary television culture in regards to journalistic attention and viewership. These shows have gathered enormous viewership and momentum since their premieres (Binsted, Adalain). Considering the frequency with which these two shows are discussed in the media, I argue that these two landmark texts can help characterize the culture of popular television culture.

In the last decade, television shows have been redefined in terms of their aesthetic and narrative design. According to Jason Mittell, television has changed dramatically in the last two decades on cultural, structural, and

technological levels (Mittell, 19). With the arrival of new streaming technologies, the exhibition and strategies for viewing new television content has been reimagined. As it grows, the market for television shows is becoming more competitive, increasing the caliber of shows, and expanding the repertoire of stories and perspectives available to consumers. Visual content creators now have to consider new forms of exhibition for their creative content as well as the fact that their viewers are becoming more media literate. All of these elements combined have enabled the expansion of television's storytelling possibilities. Experimentation with narrative structure and altering stylistic conventions have become increasingly popular devices through which show creators have changed the face of television. Now, more television shows are assuming a higher quality by becoming more cinematic and borrowing technique from more culturally distinguished media (Mittell, 15). *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Game of Thrones* are both considered to be quality television shows for these reasons. Both shows heavily incorporate cinematic elements and techniques to elevate their aesthetics and popular appeal. Upon the arrival of new streaming and camera technologies, visual media content has been able to reach a broader and more media literate audience than ever before. As a result, the production of television shows is being altered to showcase cinematic quality while increasing engagement.

Hulu's *The Handmaid's Tale* has received attention in the media for its unique representation of the female centric perspective. Reed Morano worked closely with British director of photography Colin Watkinson to establish the

visual conventions of the show. Some media journalists have deemed *The Handmaid's Tale* an employer of "the female gaze" (Cohen, Blake, Forster, McFarland). Cinematically, *The Handmaid's Tale* is using unconventional styles of focus and framing to represent a female perspective. Extremely shallow focus and the significance of extreme close up shots are trademarks the show's unique visual language. The show's director and cinematographer explain that the use of shallow focus and handheld camerawork helps the viewer identify more closely with the show's central character, Offred. This technique tailors the field of view to the character's facial expressions and magnifies emotional changes, coaxing the spectator to sympathize and become more emotionally invested in the central character. Additionally, the female gaze in the show functions primarily to focus the viewer's attention on the emotional experiences of the central character, not necessarily to objectify men. The male gaze is still present in popular television, as seen in HBO's *Game of Thrones*. Though it gives some level of narrative agency to its female heroines, the series has received negative criticism for its objectification of women (Sloan). More specifically, a scene in which one of the show's central female characters is raped sparked controversial discussion in the media (Bahadur). Closely analyzing and contrasting these two works in terms of their formal conventions while incorporating examples of their reception in the media will inform the intrinsic differences between the male gaze and female gaze.

## Shot Analysis and Formal Analysis

Film theorists David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson define form as a “specific system of patterned relationships that we perceive in an artwork” (Bordwell, 146). They note that understanding the concept of form can help identify the function of the elements of any particular body of work. Inspecting the formal conventions of popular television can not only help illuminate embedded messages of social commentary, but it can also give a snapshot of the style and cultural dynamics of popular television now.

The purpose of comparing stylistic and aesthetic conventions of two popular television shows is to illuminate the disparity of visual language between work created by men and work created by women. By clearly identifying stylistic and visual conventions of both a male and female gaze, a definition of the female gaze can be further developed. I will be identifying trends in the conventions of visual language and perspective for two scenes involving the subjugation of women. I will perform a shot analysis and subsequently a formal analysis to identify overarching trends in a female gaze and pinpoint differences between the female gaze and male gaze. To do this, I will examine two scenes from two different quality television shows which have garnered media attention for their stylistic differences in demonstrating the subjugation of female characters. One scene is from an episode of *The Handmaid's Tale*, “Offred” in which the show’s central female character, Offred is ritualistically raped. The production is considered to be a gender-balanced production according to ReFrame, a coalition formed by Women in Film and the



Sundance Institute. This means that female-identifying people were hired for half of the critical areas of production, such as writer, director, producer, lead, co-lead, and others (Pedersen). The episode's director and executive producer, Reed Morano constructed a unique representation of Offred's female perspective, which resulted in the media's discussion of female gaze formal conventions. The other scene is from an episode of *Game of Thrones*, "Unbowed, Unbent, Unbroken" in which one of the show's primary female characters, Sansa Stark, is raped. The episode's writer and director are both male in addition to the episode's director of photography. The rape scene is depicted from the perspective of Theon Greyjoy, otherwise known as Reek. The conventions and creative decisions of this scene have generated conversation in media journalism and have raised ethical questions about how rape scenes should be depicted (Bahadur). This scene employs visual conventions that are indicative of the male gaze.

Timecode	Scene	Shot #	Duration	Framing (ECU, CU, MCU, MS, MLS, LS, ELS)	Angle	Movement	Perspective	Depth of Field (ES=Extremely Shallow, S=Shallow,	Description/Action	Other notes
50:13:00		1 a	:12	LS - EST	Straight	Pan right	Camera	S	Theon, Sansa, and Ramsey enter a room, candles in foreground. 3-shot	Establishing
50:25:00		1 b	:13	MS	Straight	Pan Left	Ramsey	S	Sansa enters screen left followed by Ramsey. Candles in foreground. Sansa turns around and looks at Ramsey. 2-shot	Ramsey in foreground
50:38:00		1 c	:03	MS	Straight	Steadicam	Sansa	S	Sansa in foreground. Ramsey middle frame, Theon in background - 3-shot	"are you pleased, my lady?" - R.B.
50:41:00		1 d	:04	MS	Straight	Steadicam	Ramsey	S	Sansa nods in response to Ramsey's question. 2-shot	
50:45:00		1 c	:04	MS	Straight	Steadicam	Sansa	S	3-shot	"I want you to be happy" - R.B.
50:49:00		1 d	:02	MS	Straight	Pan right	Ramsey	S	Ramsey walks screen right. 2-shot	
50:51:00		1 e	:11	LS	Low	Tilt up and pan right	Camera	S	Ramsey walks toward camera and to the right landing screen left opposite Sansa. Sansa looks to Theon after Ramsey speaks. 3-shot	"My father said your still a virgin" - R.B.
51:02:00		1 f	:03	MS	Straight	Steadicam	Sansa	S	Theon stands at the door looking down. Sansa's hands are in the foreground out of focus.	
51:05:00		1 g	:05	MS	Straight	Steadicam	Theon	S	Theon in foreground out of focus. Sansa looks. 2-shot	"yes" - SS "why" - RB
51:10:00		1 e	:05	LS	Low	Slight tilt up	Camera	S	Ramsey walks closer to Sansa. 3-shot	"why are you still a virgin?" - RB
51:15:00		1 h	:03	MCU	Straight	Steadicam	Sansa	S	2-shot Sansa in foreground out of focus	"Afraid of dwarves?" - RB
51:18:00		1 j	:04	MS	Straight	Steadicam	Ramsey	S	2-shot Ramsey in foreground slightly out of focus	"Tyrion was kind. He was gentle." - SS
51:22:00		1 h	:06	MCU	Straight	Steadicam	Sansa	S	2-shot Sansa in foreground out of focus	"He never touched me" - SS "You're not lying to me" - RB
51:28:00		1 f	:05	MS	Straight	Steadicam	Theon	S	Theon stands at the door looking around. Sansa is in the foreground out of focus.	"no my lord" - SS "Lying to your husband on his wedding night..." - RB
51:33:00		1 h	:05	MS	Straight	Steadicam	Sansa	S	2-shot Sansa in foreground out of focus	"That would be a bad way to start a marriage" - RB
51:38:00		1 j	:03	MS	Straight	Steadicam	Ramsey	S	Ramsey touches Sansa's face. 2-shot Ramsey in foreground slightly out of focus.	
51:41:00		1 h	:07	MS	Straight	Steadicam	Sansa	S	2-shot Sansa in foreground out of focus	"we are man and wife now. We should be honest with each other. Don't you think?" - RB
51:48:00		1 j	:09	MS -> MCU	Straight	Dolly in	Ramsey	S	Ramsey kisses Sansa - becomes more out of focus in foreground	"Yes, sir" - SS (kiss)
51:57:00		1 h	:06		Straight	Steadicam	Sansa	S	Ramsey steps back to original framing	"Good" - RB - Camera follows Ramsey as he steps back
52:03:00		1 j	:02	MCU	Straight	Steadicam	Ramsey	S	Sansa stands silent. Blinks. Ramsey more out of focus in foreground	
52:05:00		1 h	:02	MCU	Straight	Steadicam	Sansa	S	Ramsey talks in original framing	"Take off your clothes." - RB
52:07:00		1 j	:02	MCU	Straight	Steadicam	Ramsey	S	Sansa looks quickly to Theon - RB in fg out of focus	
52:09:00		1 e	:04	LS	Straight	None	Camera	S	Theon tries to exit the room	"Oh no, no, no." - RB

Figure 1.0 "Unbowed, Unbent, Unbroken." Episode 6, Season 5. *Game of Thrones*.

May 2015.

52:13:00	1 k	:03	MS	Straight	None	Theon	S	Ramsley tells Theon to stay in the room. Sansa looks from Theon to Ramsley as he commands him to stay in the room.	"You stay here Reek" - RB
52:16:00	1 m	:04	MLS	Low	None	Ramsley/Sansa	S	Theon turns to look over his right shoulder.	"You watch" - RB
52:20:00	1 k	:03	MS	Straight	None	Theon	S	Sansa looks back to Theon with a concerned look. Ramsley smiles at Theon	
52:23:00	1 m	:05	MLS	Low	Pan left - tracking Theon	Ramsley/Sansa	S	Theon steps screen left and stands inside the room.	
52:28:00	1 k	:08	MS	Straight	None	Theon	S	Ramsley reiterates his command and Sansa walks away.	"Do I need to ask a second time? I hate asking a second time." - RB
52:36:00	1 n	:07	MS -> MCU	Straight	Pan left then tilt up	Sansa	S ->ES	Sansa walks toward the camera and stops.	
52:43:00	1 p	:06	MCU	Low	Tilt down	Camera	S	Sansa unties the string on her clothes on her wrist	
52:49:00	1 n	:05	MCU	Straight	None	Sansa	S	Theon closes door behind them. Ramsley in the background in shallow focus.	
52:54:00	1 m	:07	MS	Straight	Pan Left	Theon	S	Theon closes the door and returns to original position.	
53:01:00	1 e	:04	MLS	Straight	None	Sansa	S	Sansa continues to untie strings on wrists. Sansa in foreground, Ramsley to screen left facing toward Theon.	"Reek?" - RB
53:05:00	1 k	:03	MS	Straight	None	Theon	S	Ramsley in foreground in right side of frame. Sansa center frame out of focus.	"I told you to watch." - RB
53:08:00	1 m	:08	MS	Straight	None	Theon	S	Theon looks up with a terrified look on his face.	"You've known Sansa since she was a girl." RB
53:16:00	1 k	:04	MS	Straight	None	Theon	S	Ramsley in foreground in right side of frame. Sansa center frame out of focus.	"Now watch her become a woman." - RB
53:20:00	1 n	:07	MCU	Straight	Pan Left	Sansa	S	Ramsley approaches Sansa from background. Sansa looks terrified.	
53:27:00	1 q	:04	MCU	Straight	Handheld	Ramsley	S	Ramsley rips Sansa's clothes along the back. Ramsley pushes Sansa down.	
53:31:00	1 r	:12	MCU -> CU	Straight	Dolly in	Sansa	S	Sansa hyperventilates	
53:43:00	1 m	:21	MS-MCU	Straight	Dolly in	Theon	S	Theon watches the rape.	Sansa screams.
54:04:00	1	End scene							

Figure 1.0 "Unbowed, Unbent, Unbroken." Episode 6, Season 5. *Game of Thrones*.

May 2015.

Timecode	Scene	Shot #	Duration	Type/Framing (ECU, CU, MCU, MS, MLS, LS, ELS)	Angle	Movement	Perspective	Depth of Field (ES=Extremely Shallow, S=Shallow, SH=Sharp)	Description/Action	Dialogue	Other Notes
28:01:00	1 a		:10	MCU	High	Handheld - slight shake	Offred	S	Offred sits and waits, Martha walks in background out of focus.		Offred Center Framed
28:10:00	1 b		:04	MCU	Low	None	Camera	S	Martha stands at attention, eyes look down toward Offred.		
28:14:00	1 a		:13	MCU	High	Handheld - slight shake	Offred	S	Offred sits and waits, eyes looking down. Martha stands behind. Nick walks in, stands beside Martha behind Offred.	"Those eggs you got today were nice and fresh" - Martha	Offred Center Framed
28:28:00	1 c		:04	MCU	Low	None	Camera	S	Nick stands at attention, uncomfortable, moves head around.	"I wish they'd hurry up. Some of us have got things to do you know?" - Martha	Nick Center Framed
28:32:00	1 a		:10	MCU	High	Handheld - slight shake	Offred	S	Offred sits and waits. Physically uncomfortable as she hears footsteps enter the room.	"Hurry up and wait" - Nick	Offred Center Framed
28:42:00	1 d		:04	MLS	Straight	None	Camera	Rack focus from FG ->Entire frame	Serena walks in behind Martha, Nick, and Offred. Picks up an ash tray from the coffee table.		Serena walks screen left.
28:46:00	1 e		:07	MLS	Straight	Pan Left and up, tracking Serena	Camera	SH	Serena walks screen left and sets the ash tray on table. She opens a box, pulls out a cigarette and places it in her mouth		Cut when Serena closes the metal box. Serena is framed on the table
28:53:00	1 f		:03	CU	High	Slight tilt down-tracking Serena	Serena	ES	Serena lights the cigarette.		Limited framing. Serena is framed up against the left side of the table.
28:56:00	1 g		:07	MCU	Low	Slight pan right	Serena	S	Serena takes a puff from her cigarette and exhales.	"Late again as usual." - Serena	Serena Center Framed
29:03:00	1 a		:08	MCU	High	Handheld - slight shake	Offred	S	Offred looks to her right.	"What is it about men?" - Serena	Offred Center Framed
29:11:00	1 g		:13	MCU	Low	None	Serena	S	There is a knock at the door. Voice over narration. Serena walks, then responds "Come in."	"The knock is prescribed because tonight this is her domain." - Offred	Offred Voice over narration. Serena Center Framed
29:24:00	1 a		:06	MCU	High	Handheld - slight shake	Offred	S	Offred stams ahead as commander Waterford walks into the room. He is seen walking in the background of the shot.	"It's a little thing, but in this house little things mean everything." - Offred	Offred Center Framed
29:30:00	1 h		:04	MS	Low	None	Offred	SH	Commander Waterford walks into frame, from the right. He turns around to face the camera.	"Good evening" - Commander Waterford	CW Center Framed
29:34:00	1 j		:03	MCU	Straight	Slight tilt down-tracking CW	Commander Waterford	S	Commander Waterford turns to his right (screen left) to look at Serena.	"Dear?"	CW limited framing, no breathing room.
29:37:00	1 g		:03	MCU	Low	None	Serena	S	Serena looks screen right at Commander Waterford		
29:40:00	1 h		:03	MS	Low	None	Commander Waterford	S	Commander Waterford takes his watch out of his pocket.	"Now let's get started" - CW	
29:43:00	1 a		:08	MCU	High	Handheld - slight shake	Offred	S	Offred stares nervously straight ahead.		
29:51:00	1 m		:10	CU	high	None	Camera	S	Commander Waterford opens a wooden box and grabs the bible from it.		
30:01:00	1 n		:06	MCU	Low	Slight tilt up	Offred	S	Commander Waterford turns screen left to face Offred.		
30:07:00	1 p		:02	CU	Straight	None	Serena	S	Commander Waterford clears his throat.		
30:09:00	1 a		:08	MCU	High	Handheld - slight shake	Offred	S	Offred is startled and looks to her right, blinking several times.	"Excuse me." - CW	

Figure 2.0 "Offred." Episode 1, Season 1. *The Handmaid's Tale*. April 2017.

30:17:00	1 q	:02	MCU->CU	Low	Dolly in	Offred	S		"And when Rachel saw that she bear Jacob no children..." - CW	
30:19:00	1 r	:06	MCU -> CU	Low	Dolly in	Serena	S	Serena looks screen right and swallows.	"...Rachel envied her sister and said unto Jacob..." - CW	
30:25:00	1 s	:01	ECU	Straight	None	Serena	ES	Commander Waterford's mouth	"Give me children..." - CW	Side profile.
30:26:00	1 t	:02	ECU	Straight	None	Serena	ES	Commander Waterford's eyes.	"Or else I die..." - CW	Side profile.
30:28:00	1 u	:02	CU	High	Dolly in	Offred	S	Offred closes her eyes.		
30:30:00	1 v	:12	CU	Bird's Eye	Dolly out	Offred	ES	Offred stares blankly ahead. Her body oscillates. She is center framed from a bird's eye view.	"...and she said, behold my maid, Bilhah..." - CW	Voice Over Narration, slow motion.
30:42:00	1 w	:06	MS	Straight	None	Offred	ES	Offred's body oscillates. Commander is out of focus	"...go in unto her..." - CW	Voice Over Narration, Slow Motion.
30:48:00	1 x	:03	MCU	Straight	Tilt up	Offred	ES	Commander's hand on hip wearing a watch. His body oscillates out of focus.		Slow Motion
30:51:00	1 y	:04	MCU	Straight	Pan up and left	Offred	ES	Commander's shoulder, body oscillating. He looks down and screen right.		Slow Motion
30:55:00	1 z	:04	CU	Straight	Tilt up	Camera	ES	Serena grips Offred's wrist tightly. Offred's body oscillating out of focus in the background. Serena's wedding ring in focus.	"...and she shall bear upon my knees..." - CW	Slow Motion
30:59:00	1 aa	:10	MCU	Bird's Eye	Dolly forward - bird's eye view	Camera	S	Camera Moves from Offred's face to Serena.	"...that I may also have children by her..." - CW	Slow Motion
31:09:00	1 ab	:03	MS	Straight	None	Serena	S	Serena stares straight ahead. Body slightly oscillating.		Side profile, Slow Motion
31:12:00	1 ac	:04	LS	High	None	Camera	SH	Commander framed from behind. Wide shot of the whole bedroom.		Slow Motion
31:16:00	1 ad	:04	CU	Straight	None	Serena	ES	Serena looks at Commander Waterford.	"...And she gave him Bilhah..." - CW	Slow Motion
31:20:00	1 ae	:04	CU	Straight	None	Commander Waterford	ES	Commander Waterford looks at Serena and looks away.	"...her handmaid to wife..." - CW	Slow Motion
31:24:00	1 ad	:03	CU	Straight	None	Serena	ES	Serena stares at Commander Waterford.		Slow Motion
31:27:00	1 af	:04	MCU	Bird's Eye	None	Offred	S	Offred stares straight up.	and Jacob went in unto her, and Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son.	
31:31:00	1 ae	:04	CU	Straight	None	Offred	ES	Commander Waterford looks down and moves to grab post.		Slow Motion
31:35:00	1 ag	:01	MCU	Staight	None	Offred	S	Commander Waterford grabs the wooden post		Slow Motion
31:36:00	1 af	:04	MCU	Birds Eye	None	Offred	S	Offred stares straight up.		Slow Motion
31:40:00	1 ah	:03	MS	Low	None	Camera	ES	Commander Waterford finishes the act.		Slow Motion
31:43:00	1 af	:05	MCU	Birds Eye	None	Offred	S	Offred stares straight up.		Slow Motion

Figure 2.0 "Offred." Episode 1, Season 1. *The Handmaid's Tale*. April 2017.

31:48:00	1 ah	:03	MS	Low	None	Camera	ES	Commander Waterford stands		Slow Motion
31:51:00	1 ak	:06	MS	Bird's Eye	None	Offred	S	Offred stares straight up. CW in foreground		Slow Motion
31:57:00	1 am	:02	MCU	Low	None	Offred	ES	The Commander stands up.		
31:59:00	1 ad	:04	CU	Straight	None	Serena	ES	Serena looks at the Commander.		
32:03:00	1 an	:02		Bird's Eye	None	Offred	S	Offred looks at the Commander		
32:05:00	1 ap	:05	MLS	Straight	Steadcam	Offred	SH	Perspective shot. The Commander cleans himself. Offred's legs in foreground.		
32:10:00	1 ad	:03	CU	Straight	None	Serena	ES	Serena looks from the Commander to Offred.		
32:13:00	1 z	:02	CU	Straight	None	Camera	ES	Serena grips Offred's wrist tightly. Serena's wedding ring in focus. Serena releases Offred's wrist.		
32:15:00	1 aq	:04	MS	Bird's Eye	None	Offred	SH	Serena yanks her dress out from under Offred's head. She swings her right leg over Offred's head.		
32:19:00	1 ac	:10	LS	High	None	Camera	SH	Commander in foreground. Wide shot of the whole bedroom. Commander puts on jacket.		
32:29:00	1 ar	:04	MCU	Bird's Eye	Dutch tilt	Offred	S	Offred stares blankly at the ceiling		
32:33:00	1 as	:06	LS	Straight	None	Camera	SH	The Commander leaves the foreground. Offred is framed in the center still lying down on the bed.		
32:39:00	1 at	:05	MS	Straight	None	Serena	SH	Serena takes out a cigarette. Shrouded in shadow.	"Get out" - Serena	
32:44:00	1 ar	:05	MCU	Bird's Eye	None	Offred	S	Offred looks around.		
32:49:00	1 au	:04	MCU	Low	None	Serena	S	Serena, annoyed, yells at Offred and puts a cigarette in her mouth.	"Are you deaf?" - Serena	
32:53:00	1 ar	:15	MCU	Bird's Eye	None	Offred	S	Offred looks around then toward Serena. She stutters	"The chances are better if I lay on my back afterwards" - Offred	
33:08:00	1 au	:04	MCU	Low	None	Serena	S	Serena, annoyed, looks around.	"Just get out" - Serena	
33:12:00	1 ar	:04	MCU	Bird's Eye	None	Offred	S	Offred looks around then gets up.		
33:18:00	1 as	:16	LS	Straight	None	Camera	SH	Offred slowly stands up and exits screen right.		
33:34:00	1 av	:19	MCU	Straight	None	Serena	S	Serena cries. Framed on the far left.		
33:53:00	1 End Scene									

Figure 2.0 "Offred." Episode 1, Season 1. *The Handmaid's Tale*. April 2017.

## Framing

Framing is what defines the physical parameters of any given image. It is the element that dictates exactly what the viewer gets to see. The frame not only shows the screen space that is visible within it, but it also implies the space around it. In addition, the frame is also the position from which the material is viewed (Bordwell, 354). Shots may be framed at different angles, levels, heights and distances. In *The Handmaid's Tale* scene, framing plays a crucial role in the representation of Offred's perspective. Framing is used to alienate certain characters, or add tension to the scene through point-of-view shots. Throughout the scene, there are several point-of-view shots which are often cut after shots that are level with a character's eye line. Framing a character can also be used as a strategy to indicate power relations.



Figure 3.0 Commander Waterford framed from a low angle to show Offred's perspective.

In the beginning of the scene in *The Handmaid's Tale*, as Offred is kneeling on the floor, Martha and Nick are both framed from low angles to illustrate Offred's view of them from below. After Serena sits down, she is framed at a slightly low angle, from Offred's eye level. The first shot of the Commander in the scene is framed from a low angle, indicating not only Offred's view of him, but also his level of authority in the scene.

As the scene progresses, the framing is used to alienate the Commander during the act of rape. Instead of being center framed, as was the case during his first shot in the scene, the Commander is now represented through a series of close-up, extreme close up, and insert shots. His face is shown only after two shots that objectify his body through fragmentation. The fragmentation works to objectify the Commander by first dehumanizing him and limiting him to an object. The viewer sees an insert shot of his watch before seeing his face, indicating the detachment shown through Offred's perspective. This shot shows a detail that is mostly unrelated to the trauma at hand. Since the shots in the scene represent Offred's experience and perspective, this shot works to alienate the Commander and detach from the traumatic experience in tandem with Offred. The detachment through the fragmenting cinematography sways the viewer to empathize with Offred as she is the one initiating the fragmenting look.



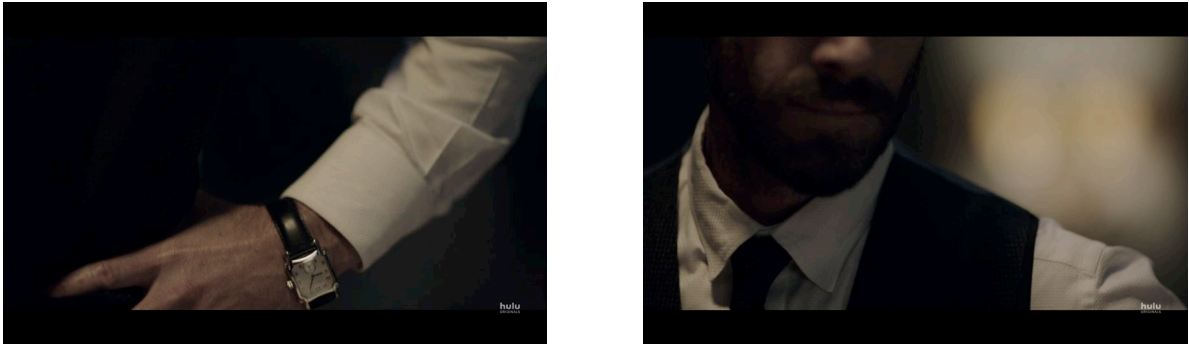


Figure 3.1 Framing is used to fragment Commander Waterford which reflects Offred's detached perspective.

When the Commander's face is shown, he is framed in a close-up that limits the space around him. Ultimately the framing aims to fragment, objectify, and alienate the Commander while tailoring the field of view to Offred's.

In contrast, the *Game of Thrones* scene, is primarily framed using a medium-wide or the medium shot. The framing of these shots is farther from the subject, making the shots less personal and emotionally pointed. Instead, there is a detachment, or a distance from the audience to the characters. They are only allowed so close to the subject's face, which doesn't give them opportunity to empathize with the subject as much as a close up would. Additionally, the progression of framing throughout the scene is minimal. The dramatic effect that the progression of framing, also known as sequencing, can generate is nearly absent from the scene. There are two close up shots near the end of the scene, both of which dolly into the faces of two characters: the victim of the rape, and the witness to the act. The close ups of both the victim and the witness work to equate that the dramatic value and impact of both shots and to

equalize the emotional impact, making the struggle of the victim, Sansa, equal to the struggle of the witness, Theon. Ultimately, the framing does not stray from a pattern of mid shots and medium wide shots, focusing more on the movement and positioning of the characters throughout the room as well as the mise-en-scene.

While the *Game of Thrones* scene focuses more on the visual elements within the scene and the general movement of the characters, the scene in *The Handmaid's Tale* has more visual progression through framing. The visual progression in *The Handmaid's Tale* is more dramatic in the sense that it becomes proximally closer to the show's central character during the time of the trauma. This gives more emotional agency to the main character, communicating to the audience that they should sympathize with her emotional arc. The shot types in *Game of Thrones* do not stray from more traditional mid-wide and mid shots. There is more of an emphasis on the movements of the characters and not as much importance through framing on their emotional arc. The two close - up shots in the scene occur near conclusion of the scene. However, the duration of the close-up shot on Theon is much longer than the close up dolly-in shot on Sansa. This indicates that the reaction of Theon is more important than the emotional trauma of Sansa, despite Sansa being more of a core character to the show and the person who was assaulted.

Another key element to consider while discussing framing is the camera movement, or the mobility of the frame. The camera movement in a scene can provide more information about the type and depth of space that is being shot.

Camera movement can also be used strategically to simulate human movement in perspective shots. Camera movement in both scenes is represented primarily through tracking shots, dolly shots, and handheld shots.

Dollying happens when the camera as a whole is attached to a rig that travels toward or away from the subject. Dollying can be a powerful technique if the director wants to avoid warping the space in the scene by using a zoom lens. In both scenes, dollying is used to provide dramatic tension and suspense. It is also used to focus in on the subject's face. In *The Handmaid's Tale* scene, dollying into the face of the subject is used to provide tension and drama just before the rape of the central character. Three short consecutive dolly-in shots are used to elevate the drama between the characters. It is also used to isolate the three characters and to bring their dynamics to the forefront of the audience's attention, just before the most emotionally heavy segment in the scene. The dollying in the *Game of Thrones* scene is stylistically used in a similar way. However, it is used in a different way strategically. The two dolly-in shots occur at the very end of the scene and episode. In the first shot, Sansa is the subject. The camera moves progressively closer to her face just before Ramsey rapes her. However, the camera cuts away from her face before the most intense emotional trauma of the scene. Instead, there is a dolly-in shot to Theon's face while the act of rape occurs. This shot is the punctuating shot of the scene and the episode and the nature of the shot as well as its positioning in the scene communicates that this reaction is more important than that of Sansa's.



Figure 3.2: The dolly-in shots indicate the shift in perspective from Sansa to Theon.

Sansa is a more central character in the show, but her dolly-in shot is shorter in duration than that of Theon's. Sansa's emotional perspective is only represented before the actual act of rape. The dolly-in shot is used to generate drama and suspense but it is used to encourage the audience to empathize with Theon as his dolly-in shot is much slower and longer.

Additionally, a tilt shot is used to view Sansa's body immediately preceding the rape. The camera slowly tilts down from her face to the dress lace she unties on her wrist. This use of camera movement serves a primary purpose to allow the audience to look at Sansa's image. Instead of focusing on her facial expression, the camera gives the audience a voyeuristic shot of Sansa which objectifies and dehumanizes her by detaching from her

perspective. Furthermore, following this shot, Ramsey violently rips the back of Sansa's dress, but instead of framing her face, the camera frames her back, viewing her figure as an object of desire from the perspective of Ramsey.

Mulvey argues that one of the key devices used to create the male gaze is the fragmenting of the female form. As the scene progresses, Sansa's perspective becomes more distant as her body is fragmented and ultimately not shown.

This detaches the viewer from her personal experience at the moment that her dress is ripped. Omitting the view of Sansa's facial expression during this first aggressive physical act removes the audience from empathizing fully with her due to this shift in perspective. This change in perspective minimizes Sansa's emotional relevance in the scene even though her experience as the victim of rape is the most visceral out of the three characters involved.

Another camera movement that is present in both scenes is the handheld technique. Handheld shots are used in both scenes, and used for the same effect: to generate an immediacy with the characters and often an uneasiness in the character whose perspective is being shot.

The cinematography in *The Handmaid's Tale* is influenced largely by the perspective of the central character, thus what she is seeing and feeling must be reflected in the types of shots executed. Generally, the shots are framed closer in proximity to the subject to magnify subtle actions and expressions. Adding the handheld camera technique to this adds complexity and layering to the expressed emotion of the character and how this is received by the viewer. The feeling of uneasiness and immediacy is paired with a close attention to the

expression on the subject's face, helping the viewer identify with the tension of the subject. This technique contributes to the cinematic dramatic quality and appropriately highlights the intricacies of emotional expression.

While *The Handmaid's Tale* shots are framed closer in proximity to the subject, the *Game of Thrones* shots are generally medium to medium-long in distance with a slight handheld effect. The handheld movement in this case is used less so for dramatic impact. Rather it is used to provide more subtle immediacy and to capture all the movements of the characters within the shot. The camera moves slightly to capture character movement while maintaining the proper conventions of framing.

The conventions of framing and camera movement inform the gazes through which both scenes unfold. The framing and movement in *Game of Thrones* indicates a shift in perspective from Sansa, the most central character in the scene, to Theon, a character that resides more as an observer at the periphery of both the space and the scene. In the case of the *Game of Thrones* scene, there is a shift in the primary perspective to one of an observer. In contrast, the perspective in *The Handmaid's Tale* scene is more defined and consistent throughout. Though there are slight transgressions into individual characters' perspectives to reveal changes in character or introspection, the primary gaze is limited to that of Offred.

Framing and camera movements are key elements in Mulvey's establishment of the male gaze. The differences in the gazes present in each scene surface through the motion and proximity of the viewer's seeing eye: the

camera. A male gaze perspective can be recognized by the movement along Sansa's body, the shifting dolly shots from Sansa to Theon, and the shift from Sansa's point of view to Theon's. The female perspective in *The Handmaid's Tale* scene is present through the immediate, intimate relationship between the central character's facial expression and the camera. Thus, in this case, framing the central female character's facial movement is a key element in a female gaze.

### **Lensing and Depth of Field**

The focal length of a lens dictates the perceived magnification, depth, and scale of everything in the image (Bordwell, 318). Lenses can affect everything involving the field of view, perspective, and depth of field of a shot. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Morano and Watkinson adopted a particular look using Canon K35 lenses made in the 1970s (O'Falt). The show's creators had firm intentions of reflecting the point of view of Offred as it is reflected in the novel. In an *Indiewire* article, Morano remarks on the point of view element of the show saying "Trying to put yourself in someone's head — how do you visualize that? One of the ways I always thought we'd visualize that was by putting the camera physically closer to her for her close-ups, be on a wider lens because it feels a little bit more uncomfortable and there's something a little bit more unsettling about that. It makes the audience close the person in much more uncomfortable way" (O'Falt). Considering *The Handmaid's Tale* is a highly subjective, point of view show, Morano and Watkinson worked to give Offred a slightly more intimate attention by using a different lens for most of her close-

ups (Miller). Morano and Watkinson used a 28mm Zeiss 2.1 lens to capture most of Offred's close-ups with more detail and immediacy. The concept of shooting a point of view shot required the use of a distinct lens to capture her point of view and to distinguish it from other characters (Miller). The lensing and depth of field change as the scene progresses. The Commander is alienated through limited framing and extremely shallow depth of field. The shots of Offred during the trauma are even more shallow, cueing to the audience that this is an experience with limited clarity, an experience she does not want to remember.

The shots of Offred during the act of rape are in extremely shallow focus, often times including a depth of field so shallow that only her eyes and mouth are in focus. The lensing and depth of field decisions tailor the attention to Offred's expression of emotion during the most extreme point of tension. Through field of view and depth of field, the audience can decipher that this experience is one that Offred does not wish to remember due to its lack of sharp clarity. The audience is also encouraged to become empathetic and to connect with the emotions and point of view of Offred due to the intentional focus plane. Different from how the focus is used in the shots of Offred, the focus in tandem with limited framing is used to dehumanize and distance the Commander during the act of rape.

While *The Handmaid's Tale* uses lensing to manipulate depth of field in a very intentional way, the changes in focus in the *Game of Thrones* scene are fairly minimal. Though lensing still isolates the characters from the background



in each shot, this is a pattern that is seen in most of the shots and is used primarily to achieve a level of quality that is associated with that of cinematic visuals.



Figure 4.0 Extremely shallow focus is used to tailor the attention to Offred's expression during the most extreme point of tension in the scene.

The female gaze aesthetic is being discussed by some media outlets and female cinematographers as having an intimate, empathetic, and close feel (Telfer, Blake). The lens choices in *The Handmaid's Tale* demonstrate a close adherence to this notion. The proximity of the camera is physically closer to Offred's face more often than it is to any character in the *Game of Thrones* scene. Additionally, the extremely shallow focus puts more importance on the areas within the frame that are in focus. It is through the limitations of the frame and the depth of field that Offred's perspective is shown. The limited focus

provides several visual cues for the viewer to recognize and sympathize with the experience of the female character and what she is seeing. Thus, I argue that the female gaze can partially be defined through its use of shallow depth of field. The depth of field isolates the attention on Offred's eyes which generates an empathetic relationship between subject and viewer.

Mulvey's theory of the male gaze relies heavily on the notion of fragmenting and stylizing the female form. The fragmentation in *The Handmaid's Tale* scene occurs to alienate the attacker of the victim instead of stylizing the woman's body for pleasure. It subverts the principles of female objectification and emphasizes the feelings of the central female character. In this situation, the female gaze is used to provide a closeness and an intimate connection in addition to fragmenting the male form.

### **Lighting**

Bordwell and Thompson discuss lighting as more than a tool for illumination within the image. Instead, the manipulation of light can be used to convey meaning. The combination of light areas and dark areas within the frame contribute to the overall composition of each shot and help guide the eye to objects and actions (Bordwell, 235). The lighting in a shot can be defined by its highlight and shadows. A highlight is a patch of relative brightness on a surface whereas shadows are dark areas between rays of light. According to Bordwell and Thompson, shadows come in two types: attached shadows and cast shadows (Bordwell, 236). Both highlights and shadows can help establish a sense of scene space and the dramatic value of a particular image. Like

framing, lighting is instrumental in illuminating the perspective of the shot, guiding the eye to the brightest areas of the frame. Bordwell and Thompson isolate four key features of lighting: quality, direction, source, and color (Bordwell, 237). Both scenes use lighting in different ways to generate different moods and point to different perspectives throughout.

Lighting quality refers to the relative intensity of the illumination (Bordwell, 237). Hard light generates definition and sharp edges whereas soft light creates diffusion and less definition. In *The Handmaid's Tale* scene, the scene begins with low-key diffuse lighting, a technique that creates high contrast, dramatic images. As the scene progresses, the lighting on the main character becomes brighter, eliminating shadows and focusing more attention on her facial expression during the traumatic act. The lighting is used to identify a focal point in the frame. In this case, it is used to signal a focus of attention on the expression on Offred's face. In contrast, the *Game of Thrones* scene offers fewer dynamic changes in light quality. The low-key, diffuse lighting gives the scene a shadowed, dim look throughout allowing the viewer to see only half of each character's face including the primary character for the entirety of the scene. The low candlelit source lighting contributes to the lack of light change in the scene.

The direction of lighting refers to the path of light from the source to the object receiving the light (Bordwell, 238). Morano and Watkinson take advantage of side lighting and top lighting in this scene. They use the middle of the face as a reference point, making sure to only light one half of the face that

is framed. This creates an attached shadow on the unlit half of the face, generating a shading effect. Thus, this style creates high contrast shadows and contributes to the tension and dramatic impact of each shot.

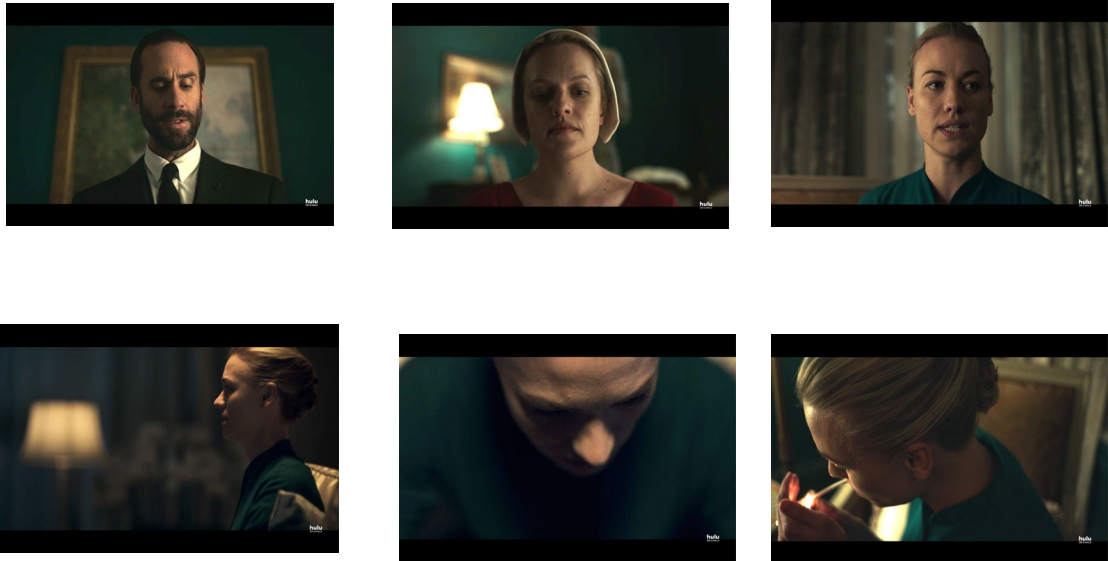


Figure 5.0 Lighting is used to create high contrast images that isolate character emotion and set the tone.

Additionally, the lighting moves from side lighting to frontal lighting on Offred as the scene progresses. The light shines more brightly, directly, and evenly on the front of her face, eliminating most shadows and drawing attention to her eyes during a time of trauma. The most dehumanized character during the rape is the Commander, his face obscured by shadow and body viewed in fragments. Again, this indicates that Offred's perspective is the one that is most primary at this time.

In the *Game of Thrones* scene, the light direction depends primarily on the position of the natural light source in the mise-en-scene. In this case, the directors used natural candlelight, a low, warm light, to simulate the time in

which the story takes place. Thus, the use of direction in light becomes very limited, and the directors of photography must rely more on the proximity of the characters to the candles as light sources. Similar to the initial direction of light in *The Handmaid's Tale* scene, the directors of photography choose to use side lighting which generates shading on the unlit side of the face and thus a dramatic ratio. Dramatic ratio is a lighting technique used to light exactly half of the subject's face which generates a harsh contrast of light and shadow divided by the center of the face. This technique can be used to reflect tension within a character through the high contrast, shrouding one side of the face while exposing the other. The occurrence of dramatic ratio is also seen in the *Game of Thrones* scene. That being said, there is little variation in the light direction

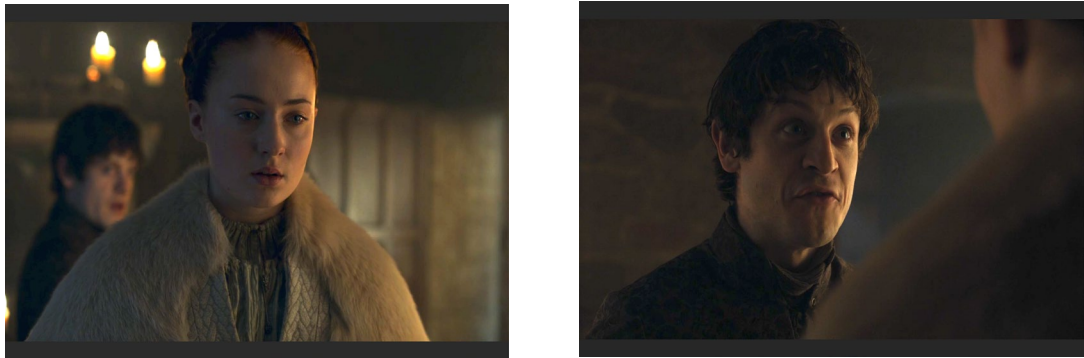


Figure 5.1 Light is used to generate dramatic ration, but little variation is used to create tension.

throughout the scene, even in times of emotional trauma for Sansa, a central character.

Lighting sources refer to where the light is coming from. According to Bordwell and Thompson, decisions behind lighting design are often motivated

by the visible sources of light in the mise-en-scene of the frame. *The Handmaid's Tale* scene includes lamps and chandeliers as visible light sources, and the type of light used simulates light that could originate from these sources, however artificial. As the scene progresses, the light becomes increasingly artificial and direct. The *Game of Thrones* scene uses two total sources of light which includes principally candlelight, and very briefly, artificial light. Candles provide the primary light source for most of the action in the scene. The artificial light is much cooler and is emitted from outside the room, indicating it has a different source that is likely artificial light.

I will abstain from elaborating on the use of color lighting as both scenes utilize source lighting to dictate the color of light used to illuminate the subject of each frame. Both scenes demonstrate warm color temperatures as a result of the warm light emitted by the visible light sources.

Overall, *The Handmaid's Tale* scene uses lighting to isolate Offred and to highlight her expression. Morano and Watkinson start with diffuse side lighting on each character's face, establishing a normal pattern of shading on each face. As the scene progresses, the lighting on the main character shifts to frontal, more luminous, high key lighting which generates fewer shadows and guides the viewer to focus on Offred's face throughout the duration of her trauma. Designing the light in this way tailors the viewer's attention to Offred's eyes, giving them an opportunity to read her emotions, see through her perspective, and sympathize with her. A sense of isolation through light design develops as her subjugation occurs.

*Game of Thrones* relies heavily on low light due to the parameters of using candles as natural lighting sources to create an authentic look. The variation in light quality, direction, and source is minimal, resulting in little development in the light design as the scene progresses. The soft, diffuse, warm light generated by the candles in the scene creates low visibility and attached shadows. However, lack of variety in light quality and direction in combination with the parameters of candlelight as a primary source, results in a less dramatic effect as the dynamics of the scene and emotions of the primary character change.

Ultimately, the use of light in each scene is indicative of the each show's aesthetic, setting, and period. The manipulation of light, however, appears to be used with more dramatic intention in the scene from *The Handmaid's Tale* compared to the *Game of Thrones* scene. The light direction is used to illuminate the face of Offred during the act of terror. Since lighting is designed to guide the eye to the brightest portion of each shot, the lighting is much more integrated into the design of the overall show and the importance of characters. In this way, the lighting design adds another layer to the crafting of the female perspective in the show by spotlighting Offred, especially during the most traumatic part of the scene.

The light within each shot guides the eye to what the director of photography wants the viewer to focus on. There is a clear relationship to the development of characters and their connections in *The Handmaid's Tale* through lighting style. The lighting contributes to the challenging of the male

gaze conventions by increasingly highlighting Offred's face and guiding the viewer's eye to the facial movements especially during the most emotionally tense moment of the scene. Considering the decision to shine bright and broad lighting on Offred's face during the act of rape, the light was clearly used to draw more attention to her experience, over any other character's experience, during the trauma. The light is even used to alienate the Commander, casting several harsh shadows on his face to contrast the even light on Offred's as the scene progresses. The development of the lighting provides an obvious clue that Offred's perspective is the primary perspective in the scene. The lighting is used not to objectify or glamourize Offred's body, but is used to represent what she sees and feels. Just like the light intensity and design is used to direct the most attention to Offred's face, the light in the *Game of Thrones* scene is used to direct more attention to Theon's face as the scene progresses. The broad light on his face is the brightest in the scene despite the fact that Sansa's character experiences the most physical and emotional trauma. Lighting in this situation is used to illuminate the face of the bystander and not the victim.

### **Shot Duration**

Shot duration is defined by the amount of time a shot is on screen following one shot and preceding another. It can serve as a device through which the audience can evaluate the shot's relationship and significance to the sequence. Duration is used to shape time in such a way that reveals the perspective in the two scenes.



The longest shot in the *Game of Thrones* scene is the final shot dolly in shot on Theon. This shot lasts for approximately 20 seconds, which far outlasts all of the other shots in the scene. The long duration of the shot gives it more distinction and weight than the other shots. The duration of this shot along with the sound in the background happening off screen aligns the viewer with the perspective of Theon. This shot also encourages a self evaluation of emotion from the audience. The normal pacing or rhythm of the cuts is disrupted by the inclusion of this shot. Since the longest shot in the scene occurs from Theon's perspective, his experience is what the audience is interacting with during the rape of a more crucial character to the plot whose perspective was previously at the forefront of the scene. Both the exposure with which Theon's face is shown and its location as the longest shot within the sequence indicate that Theon's perspective is the primary perspective at the end of the scene. The audience becomes detached from connecting with Sansa's perspective and they assume the observer perspective of Theon.

Two of the three longest shots in the scene from *The Handmaid's Tale* are from Offred's perspective. While there are shorter cuts of the Commander and Serena, Offred's screen exposure during the act of rape is slightly longer each time her face is shown. The longer shots that focus on Offred allow the viewer to recognize unconsciously that her beats of emotion matter most in the overall sequence.

### **Speed of Motion**

Though the *Game of Thrones* scene does not utilize alternative speeds,

*The Handmaid's Tale* uses slow motion to elongate and augment the emotional trauma of the scene. The speed of motion dictates the pace of the action within the scene. Morano and Watkinson choose to use slow motion for the most traumatic sequence of the scene: the actual rape. The slow motion allows for a more vivid and extremely detailed capturing of movement. In tandem with the point-of-view shots from Offred's perspective during the rape, the slow motion allows for the viewer to empathize with Offred's trauma. Thus, slow motion is used as a device to elongate the sequence which reflects Offred's state of emotional trauma. The slow motion allows the audience to process not only the action but is tasked with the evaluation of how the central character feels at that moment. The motion of the sequence provides impacts the rhythm of movement as well as the overall rhythm of the scene. The slowing down of the visuals at this point in the scene signals an importance of this moment within the scene. As the audience is transported through the scene via Offred's perspective, the slow motion provides more time for the audience to evaluate why the slow motion is being used and process the vivid trauma of Offred's experience. Thus, the slow motion is a tool through which the female perspective is augmented, though it may not be a defining characteristic of a female gaze. Slow motion has also been used to augment the formal conventions of the male gaze in order to accentuate the objectification of the female form. Conversely, in *The Handmaid's Tale*, the more familiar application of slow motion is subverted. Instead, the slow motion draws the audience closer to the trauma of the central character.

## Conclusion

Considering the findings of this comparative formal analysis, I argue that the female gaze as it appears in *The Handmaid's Tale* diverges cinematically and narratively from male gaze conventions. The frequency with which shallow focus and extreme close up shots are used shows a closer attention to the female protagonist's facial expression and limits "the look" to her emotion and experience. The shot analysis confirms that the female gaze does deserve its own definition as it diverges significantly from male gaze conventions and it exists for a different purpose. The male gaze, as Mulvey argues, exists for the purposes of objectifying female bodies for pleasure and to elicit desire.

The female gaze as observed in *The Handmaid's Tale* is not simply a reciprocation of the male gaze and does not exist to objectify the male form to generate desire. Instead, the female gaze is more complicated, navigating through screen space for the purposes of creating an empathetic connection between the central female character and the audience. The precise visual language crafted through lighting, framing, and depth of field in *The Handmaid's Tale* shows a clear intention to portray Offred's perspective in a close, immediate, and individual way. This stylistic divergence from male gaze conventions prompts the reconfiguration of female gaze theory.

While *The Handmaid's Tale* scene incorporates a more intricate visual language, the *Game of Thrones* scene focuses much more attention on the plot and conversations between characters. The differences between the shows can be attributed to each show's individual aesthetic, development, and pace.

However, using the through line of emotional and physical subjugation of central female characters, there is much more nuance and attention given to Offred's character, giving her a much more complex, individual female perspective.

After analyzing all of these stylistic differences, I believe that the female gaze deserves to have an expanded definition to include the trends of its own visual language. The male gaze has a very distinct purpose; to generate desire. However, in my research, I find that the specific purpose for a female gaze is not as focused and clear. The female perspective present in this case study did not objectify others for the intentions of eliciting pleasure. As I interpret it through the close examination of these texts, I define the female gaze as a way of experiencing the female perspective through proximally close and intimate images that generate an emotional connection to the central character. As female driven stories continue to be produced and popularized, analysis surrounding these texts should pay close attention to the trends in visual style and nuance to draw further conclusions about its purpose and the broader inclusion of more identities. Both the male and female gazes operate on a binary plane.

This philosophy is toxic when considering the multidimensionality of identity and thus interpretation of visual media. Mulvey's male gaze theory is criticized for its lack of discussion regarding intersectional identity and interpretation. Scholar, social activist, and author bell hooks rejects Mulvey's gaze theory. Hooks uses the concept of the ideal ego to explain the black

female viewing strategy and to challenge that which is crafted as the ideal form in Mulvey's argument. Hooks argues that since there is a considerable lack of black female representation, the black female spectator must be in opposition to the white woman's body and must actively decide to not identify with it as it is represented as the ideal ego in cinema (hooks, 118).

If the female gaze were to encompass all female work, how could the theory aim to encompass a variety of female identities? Caetlin Benson-Allott comments on the need for more representation in regards to the diversity of female experience. Benson-Allott argues that though there are a growing number of popular television series with strong female leads such as *I Love Dick*, and *GLOW*, the shows still don't equally represent a variety of female identities and experiences. She states these two shows "introduce characters of color only in supporting roles that contest but never destabilize the white protagonists' racial solipsism. This strategic but facile gesture reveals how far these shows have to go to confront the entangled injustices of social inequality" (Benson-Allott, 66). However, Benson-Allott argues that the show *Insecure*, "offers an intersectional, feminist perspective on black women's experiences of social estrangement" and that its story, structure, and cinematography amount to "a truly justice-demanding way of making television" (Benson-Allott, 65). Applying this logic to Mulvey's male gaze theory illuminates the lack of inclusion and consideration of all identities other than white, heterosexual, males. Taking an intersectional, feminist approach while considering a new theoretical framework for a female gaze before it is concretely established in academic

discourse can discourage a binary logic surrounding these perspectives. Perhaps the female gaze as I have defined it can become more all-encompassing by being perceived not simply as a challenging gaze, but as a multifaceted alternative gaze to the dominant male gaze. In an interview with Tori Telfer for *Vulture*, director of photography Natasha Braier comments on the current roles of male and alternative gazes stating:

I think there is such thing as the male gaze, as per Laura Mulvey's theory, and that gaze, if you talk strictly about cinema only, has more than 100 years of monopoly. It colonized the new medium from the start...The female gaze, if there is such, never had the opportunity to truly develop and become something we can analyze. I think every cinematographer has their own unique gaze, technical skills, and style regardless of their gender. And reducing things to two types of gaze doesn't make much sense to me. Plus, we are always working with a director and putting our skills at the service of manifesting their vision. So the final 'gaze' is the result of the combination between these two artists creating a frame together. (Telfer)

Considering this perspective on the boundaries of gaze theories, perhaps the creation and popularity of shows that engage with alternative perspectives will shape a new understanding of gazes. Though the male gaze will always be concretely established as a known and understood perspective, the study and

development of alternative gaze theories can inform the ways in which we think about challenging this male gaze norm. The notion of being bound to a gender binary is not conducive to the vitality of critical discourse of new and unique perspectives that may become popularized in the future.

Though the focus of this project pertains to the difference between two binary gendered perspectives, I believe that more research needs to be conducted in the area of intersectional and queer gazes in order to add to the number of theoretical entities in critical discourse. In a *Los Angeles Times* article, associate professor Karen Tongson comments on the understanding of a queer gaze saying:

A queer gaze can help decenter what we prioritize in storytelling, decentering where stories usually happen and finding them in places we don't usually look...The male gaze and straight gaze have a particular way of understanding what sex and intimacy looks like...What a queer gaze makes possible is a different rhythm to how we might play out and choreograph that intimacy, a different style of looking that sometimes moves beyond the configuration of bodies in intimacy and focuses on the connection and intimacy itself. (Anderson)

Identifying trends like these in a broader range of media texts across contemporary popular culture can help in the categorization and organization of discussion surrounding these alternative, multifaceted gazes. Ultimately, the study and development of gazes that intersect multiple identities can challenge

and progress the ways in which scholars, journalists, creators, and consumers relate to texts as they surface in popular culture. Reimagining the treatment and discussion of alternative gazes in scholarly and critical works can hopefully have a lasting impact on the ways in which television shows and films are consumed and criticized.



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