

“EK SAL JOU HEELTYD DOPHOU.”
(I’LL BE WATCHING YOU THE WHOLE TIME)
SURVEILLANCE AND THE MALE GAZE IN FILMS
BY BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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ABSTRACT

In this study I focus on the representation of women in crime films by Black South African women to understand how Black South African women directors represent women onscreen. Laura Mulvey's 1975 essay, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' on the male gaze in Classical Hollywood cinema serves as the springboard for a close textual analysis of Jyoti Mistry's *Impunity* (2015) and Nosipho Dumisa's *Nommer 37* (Number 37) (2018). I set out to determine how Mistry and Dumisa use the camera to represent the women protagonists in the two films, and whether they reproduce, transform, or comment on the patriarchal conventions of representation.

This study finds that both directors include aspects of unconventional representation in their films, but that overall, Mistry and Dumisa direct viewers to regard the women onscreen through a heterosexual patriarchal male gaze. Strikingly, in both films, this male gaze is one of surveillance. In *Nommer 37* the surveillance of the woman includes the threat of punitive sexual violence, and in *Impunity* the woman performs her femininity for the benefit of the surveilling male gaze. Through the self-conscious application of surveillance in *Impunity*, Mistry also implicates the spectator in the violence meted out to the woman. I conclude that while both filmmakers comment on the position of women in society, that by and large, they reproduce patriarchal conventions without offering new ways to regard women onscreen.

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INTRODUCTION

REGARDING WOMEN

My interest in the work of Black¹ women directors in South Africa emerges from my experience as a Black woman director working in South African film and television, and as a member of industry organisations. I noticed that the marginal position of women, and Black women in particular, receives little consideration from both filmmakers and government bodies with the power to effect legislative change to assist women filmmakers.

Notwithstanding the National Film and Video Foundation's (NFVF) role of support for those who were excluded under apartheid (Botha, 2012a:168), their list of cinematic releases for 2010 to 2018, summarised in table one (see Appendix), shows that far more films are directed by men than by women. In 2015, more than double the number of men than women directed films that received theatrical releases, and in 2018, the number was over three times higher for men than for women. The two films I have chosen to study emerged during this period, namely, Nosipho Dumisa's *Nommer 37* (Number 37) (2018) and Jyoti Mistry's *Impunity* (2015).

In addition to industry neglect around growing the number of women filmmakers, South African film scholarship pays scant critical attention to this small number of films by women directors that does exist. Scholarship on South African film to date, tends to consider the historical development of the industry (Botha, 2007, 2012a & 2012b), and the socio-political context of filmmaking and film viewing (Maingard, 2007; & Modisane, 2013a). The studies of post-apartheid South African films I have read that do analyse film texts focus on films by male filmmakers, even as they consider the representation of women (Twiggs, 2003 & Modisane, 2013b) and gender (Oa Magogodi, 2003). Astrid Treffry-Goatley's 2010 research into the representation of post-apartheid identities studies only films by male directors, Zola Maseko, John Boorman, and Darrell Roodt. The 2019 special edition of the *Journal of African Cinemas* includes only one film with a woman as co-director in its review of "contemporary South African cinema" (Rijsdijk & Lawrence, 2019). These studies lay the foundation for studies like mine that follow, and the fact that more men than women have

¹ My usage of racial terminology is clarified later in the introduction.

traditionally made films in South Africa feeds into what may be studied. The introduction of women into South African filmmaking through national support initiatives, behoves scholars to pay critical attention to the works of women. With this thesis I demonstrate that the work of Black women filmmakers has value for our understanding of society and is deserving of critical scholarship.

Lindiwe Dovey, in a 2012 article, decries the paucity of scholarship and festival programming that includes films by “African and African diaspora women []” (18). Dovey acknowledges in the article that African men are able to represent African women in a progressive manner (2012: 18 & 32-34) but adds that the inclusion of films by African women will allow for an expanded understanding of our humanity that is necessary to overcome racism and sexism (2012:34). Dovey is referring to films across the continent, but the NFVF’s list makes it clear that the representations South Africans see of women in recent South African films are primarily from the perspective of men.

While Dovey asserts that men do not necessarily reproduce limiting stereotypes of women onscreen, patriarchal ideas may also be reinforced through the preponderance of male identified protagonists that locate the lives and concerns of men as more worthy of being filmed. *Five Fingers for Marseilles* (2018), *Vuil Wasgoed* (2017), *Die Ontwaking* (2016), *Strikdas* (2015), *Die Pro* (2015), and *iNumber Number* (2014) are notable examples of recent male dominated South African releases directed by men.

Male dominance is also reproduced onscreen through the objectification of women’s bodies in sex scenes that sexualise the female characters and not the men for the male gaze. In accordance with Hollywood tradition, we continue to measure sexual liberation onscreen by how naked female characters are, and not by how naked male characters are. Les Blair’s *Jump the Gun* (1996), for example, exposes Baby Cele’s naked breasts, but neither Lionel Newton’s nor Rapulana Seiphemo’s penises in the sex scenes. Women filmmakers can also reproduce these patriarchal viewing conventions. In sex scenes like that illustrated by figure one and a picnic scene (figure two), Mistry’s *The Bull on the Roof* (2010) requires the women to display more of their bodies than is usually exposed in daily life, compared to the nudity required of the men in these scenes. Women, in their work as actors, are frequently required to relinquish the power they have through being clothed, and to be more vulnerable in front of the crew and in front of the audience, than is required of men. Women are now part of the

filmmaking community, and it is incumbent upon scholars to discern whether these women filmmakers engage in the representation of women that conforms to patriarchal conventions, or whether they employ the language of film in new ways. This is the problem I explore in this study.



Figure 1. A couple in *The Bull on the Roof*.



Figure 2. A fully clothed man and a completely naked woman in *The Bull on the Roof*.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

This inattention to the position of women filmmakers at the institutional level, and to the films of women filmmakers at the level of scholarship inspires my decision to engage in a close feminist textual analysis of films by Black women directors in South Africa. Alan McKee refers to textual analysis as a methodology that considers “the relationship between knowledge and power,” (2001:2) and that allows for nuanced and complex interpretations of texts (McKee, 2001:19). Amina Mama, defines feminism as a global movement that “challenge[s] the subordination of women” (2004:121). Combining McKee’s understanding of textual analysis with Mama’s definition of feminism, feminist textual analysis then, is analysis that reflects on the way that knowledge and power perpetuate the subordination of women in film. This close study of films by Black South African women is a deliberate decision to compensate for the evident lack of critical study of films by South African women directors and to apply a feminist lens to films by Black women directors for what they can reveal about society. I use the word woman in this study to refer to individuals who present as women.

Critics of textual analysis argue that textual analyses only present one out of a multitude of interpretations on a text (Creeber, 2006:82). I acknowledge that this study does not encompass other responses to the film, and that my interpretation of the research is, as Dongxiao Qin posits, influenced by my position in society and my personal experience

(2016:1-2). Furthermore, the knowledge I apply for this analysis, is shaped by my experience and includes, what Dragos Simandan calls, “epistemic gaps” (2019:141). My raced, classed, and gendered positions in the world lead to a different reading of the texts than that of a researcher who is situated differently in the world. Qin and Simandan argue that research is not objective. As a South African researcher, I may have a more intimate knowledge of relationships represented in the texts than a researcher from Finland, for example, and this closeness to the text is a strength but may also be a disadvantage that prevents me from seeing alternate interpretations (Simandan, 2019:141). While this study is not objective, it presents an interpretation that other researchers can build on and challenge from their perspectives for a deeper and broader engagement with the texts. Later in this introduction, I discuss my situatedness as a middle-class Black woman in South Africa to orient the reader to my particular understanding of the films.

As a textual analysis, this inquiry includes neither a study of the production context and the producers’ intentions, nor does it include a study of audience reception of the two films. While women’s experiences in the film industry, and the impact of women’s work on audiences are important considerations, this study finds meaning from the text, despite the context, the producers’ intentions, and the audience response. Taking women’s work seriously is not only about paying attention to context and reception, but also about paying close attention to the formal construction of their films. The analysis I present is based on a small sample of films because of what is available in the crime genre by Black woman filmmakers at the time of writing.

This close textual analysis is guided by feminist film theory and examines camera placement and the alignment of the male gaze during key scenes in the films to determine which character is controlling the gaze and the gender of the gaze “imposed” on the viewer (Mulvey, 1989b/1981:29). I use “imposed” in the way that Laura Mulvey does, when she concludes that regardless of the spectator’s gender, the patriarchal grammar of Classical Hollywood “impose[s] masculinity as ‘point of view’” (1989b/1981:29). Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson mark the period of the Classical Hollywood mode of filmmaking from 1917 to 1960 (1985:9). John Fawell identifies the formal elements of Classical Hollywood as those of balance, meaning, unity, and invisible style (2008:41). In this study, I also ascertain who is “*to-be-looked-at*[]” (Mulvey, 1989a/1975:19), how the “*looked-at*” body is styled, and I consider the narrative role of the woman in relation to the active-passive gendered division of

onscreen labour that Mulvey identifies. I rely on the male gaze, a Western feminist film theory in this study because both *Nommer 37* and *Impunity* are genre films. As genre films, they reproduce Hollywood conventions, and therefore I use the tools that theorists have developed to study these conventions, to establish how received genre tropes reinforce Hollywood's dominant approach to gendered looking.

Mulvey's male gaze is the inspiration and foundation of this analysis, which places Mulvey's work in conversation with feminist film scholarship by Linda Williams and Mary Anne Doane. Mulvey, Williams and Doane are primarily concerned with Hollywood texts and do not consider race in their studies of onscreen gender relations. I read them together with scholarship that provides insight into gender and race in South Africa to apply their ideas to the two films in this study. These latter texts shape my application of the feminist film scholarship, demonstrating their usefulness in this new context. In this way I draw from a range of academic disciplines, including film, anthropology, history, and philosophy, for my interpretation of representation in *Nommer 37* and *Impunity*. This approach helps me to overcome the limited amount of critical attention paid to representation in South African film.

Mulvey's work continues to be relevant, even forty-five years after it first galvanised feminist theorists, and demonstrated that the concept of the male gaze is an effective tool for showing how patriarchal norms are reproduced onscreen. Flaws to Mulvey's approach include the omission of race and the possibility of a critical spectator, as observed by bell hooks (1992a), her failure to observe that femininity is often more fluid than masculinity, as Mary Anne Doane discusses in her theory of the masquerade (1991b), and that the male gaze is based on dated ideas of binary genders (Harris & Sklar, 2009:233). The power of Mulvey's theory of the male gaze to illuminate patriarchy onscreen and how the male gaze persists in films made globally, however, is the reason it is key to my approach to determine whether Black South African women filmmakers reproduce patriarchal conventions in their work. Mulvey's theory has been so enduring because it not only provides a discussion of power, but it provides a useful set of analytical tools by which we might explore the alignment of looking and power in cinema.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' with its revelation of the patriarchal male gaze is key to this study. In order to create the illusion that what is seen onscreen is real and unmediated by a production team, and that the spectator is part of the action rather than distant from it, Classical Hollywood cinema hides the presence of the camera and of the spectator (Mulvey, 1989a/1975:25). It does this through the way it represents screen time and space as a function of the gaze of the male protagonist, which is what the spectator finally sees (1989a/1975:25). For example, when you see the male character onscreen and his eyeline shifts, the shot that follows illustrates what the man is looking at, that is, the male gaze directs the camera. Mary Anne Doane refers to this editing convention that clarifies who is looking and what they are looking at, as glance-object editing (1991c/1986:48). The male gaze is powerful through its role in directing the narrative. Augustino Deleyto, writing after Mulvey in 1991, explores what he terms focalisation, which is his term for controlling the gaze. His work looks at different ways to determine which character is focussing the viewer's attention, and his approach guides my analyses of the gazes in the *Impunity* scenes.

There is more to the male gaze, however, than simply the gaze of the male. The key characteristic of Mulvey's male gaze is that it regards women onscreen within the dominant patriarchal ideology (Mulvey, 1989a/1975:16). The male gaze adopts the patriarchal division of labour of the active man and the passive woman by ensuring the male protagonist is the one looking, and is the character actively pursuing a goal in the narrative. The leading woman, in comparison, is usually represented as the passive love interest. In accordance with the patriarchal requirement that women are beautiful, the beauty of the woman protagonist is also on display, her role in the narrative being to satisfy the visual pleasure, or scopophilia, of the male protagonist and the male spectator. Mulvey highlights that the woman's appearance is meant to have "strong visual and erotic impact" (1989a/1975:19) and refers to this as the "to-be-looked-at-ness" of the woman (Mulvey, 1989a/1975:19). In other words, the woman looks good so that the man can enjoy looking at her. I identify the presence of Mulvey's male gaze at the women in both *Nommer 37* and *Impunity*.

I apply the feminist scholarship of Mary Anne Doane and Linda Williams that draws on Mulvey's psychoanalytic feminist approach and develops it. 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' examines melodrama, musicals, and crime, and the work of Doane and Williams explores horror, crime and melodrama, and in the case of Williams, also pornography. Both

of the chapters in this thesis draw from the work of Williams and Doane, but their ideas are particularly important to my study of *Impunity*. I find Williams's ideas around the "female body genres" (2012:167) relevant to the representation of Echo in *Impunity*, as she identifies women's bodies as the site of the profusion of emotion characteristic of each genre (2012:162). Williams notes that even when the films are traditionally targeted at male audiences, as in pornography, or at teenage audiences, as in horror, the female body is the location of intense emotion (2012:162). I show in *Impunity* that the woman's body is represented as the site of extreme emotion, increasing her "to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey, 1989a/1975:19).

Williams also recognises that "to see is to desire", but that desire is an inappropriate feeling for patriarchal cinema's "good girl" (1984:561). Williams shows in 'When the Woman Looks' that the gaze of the "good girl" is therefore impeded in some way (1984:562-563), and I recognise the "good girl[']s]" imperfect vision in Pam's gaze in *Nommer 37*. The woman who *does* look, is one who, according to Williams, flaunts her sexuality, and is aware of her power, that is, of her ability to challenge the position of the man in the narrative (1984:564-570). Posing a threat to the masculine position, she thus needs to be savagely punished (Williams, 1984:570) as occurs in both *Nommer 37* and *Impunity*.

My analysis of the blue wig scene in *Impunity* is done with reference to Mary Anne Doane's essay on the concept of masquerade. Guided by the work of Joan Riviere, Doane explains that when the woman assumes the position of subject, that is the position of the man, she compensates for doing so through the performance of excessive femininity (1991b/1982:25). I identify acts of transgression by Echo and show that she engages in a performance of reassurance. Writing about the femme fatale, Doane states that the femme fatale "has power *despite* herself" (1991a:2). This power the femme fatale possesses is her sexual potency that could result in the man's loss of control over himself (Doane, 1991:2). Doane maintains, in agreement with Williams, that this threat to the man's position, requires her elimination by the narrative (1991a:2). I understand the scene with Karen, the femme fatale, as a manifestation of this argument of the punishment of the woman who assumes power.

The works of Mulvey, Doane and Williams lay the groundwork for my analysis of the representation of women in *Nommer 37* and *Impunity*. The films that they study are largely directed by white men in the United States, often over fifty years ago, and represent white

protagonists. My application of their theories is done with this in mind and draws on scholarship that explores the development of the cinematic gaze and is critical of the white male gaze. I also use scholarship that offers insight into the South African context to augment the film scholarship and facilitate its application to films by Black woman directors in contemporary South Africa.

bell hooks notes and critiques Mulvey's inattention to race and the exclusively white nature of Mulvey's male gaze (1992a:118&123). hooks reminds us that spectators are not all passive uncritical viewers of film, and describes how some Black women in America were able to be critical of Hollywood films that typically excluded them onscreen, while still being able to enjoy these films (1992a:123). hooks identifies the way that women watched onscreen representations of white womanhood as an "oppositional gaze" (1992a:123). Through her description of the experiences of African-American woman spectators, hooks alerts us that Mulvey's male gaze is a *white* male gaze and that it is the *white* woman who is the bearer of the look (1992a:118&123). She further observes that early Black male filmmakers in the United States, adopted the traditional white male gaze in their representations of Black women (1992a:118). This "oppositional gaze" of Black woman spectators demonstrates that alternative receptions of screen representations are possible. Furthermore, Janell Hobson, writing about Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), presents the film as an example where the Black woman director eschews the traditional white male gaze at the women in the film (2002). Advocating for films that foreground Black women's subjectivity as the focus of the narrative, hooks longs for a filmic practice that represents Black women as "new kinds of subjects" (2003:104). Articulated differently, this study of the gaze in *Nommer 37* and *Impunity* examines whether the Black women directors represent hooks's "new kinds of subjects". While hooks shows that Black men reproduced white patriarchal conventions of looking, Hobson shows that it is possible for a director to engage an alternate viewing regime. In this study, I show that while both of the Black woman directors employ some unconventional representations, that overwhelmingly, like hooks's Black men filmmakers, they reproduce patriarchal cinematic conventions.

Corinn Columpar offers depth to Mulvey's male gaze as she describes the development of a gaze that is white male and Western (2002:40). Columpar implicates the imperial project and the developing field of anthropology in shaping this cinematic white male Western gaze. Cinema's arrival in countries with colonies around the globe (2002:38), helped to cement the

colonial and anthropological ways of seeing people in the minds of a broader population (2002:27). These gazes became dominant and established the spectator “into a hegemonic viewing position” that is white, male and Western (Columpar, 2002:40). Reading Columpar alongside Desiree Lewis’s and John Western’s descriptions of stereotypes of people called coloured in South Africa, I show how Dumisa places the spectator of *Nommer 37* in this “hegemonic viewing position”.

Elaine Salo’s research into the formation of gender identities with a community in Manenberg is vital to my understanding of the femininities and masculinities in *Nommer 37*. Salo’s work illuminates the performance of masculinity by gangsters in Manenberg and the manner in which they police the behaviour of young women. I argue that the representations of the gangsters watching Pam in *Nommer 37* exemplify Salo’s *ouens*² (2007:170) at work, policing Pam’s behaviour. An article by Azille Coetzee and Louise du Toit offers further comprehension of the gangster’s gaze as they trace the contemporary assaultive gaze on women to colonialism (2018).

Columpar, Adhikari, Lewis, Western, Salo, Gqola, and Coetzee and Du Toit provide insight into the representation of the gendered and raced nature of the gaze in *Nommer 37*. With *Impunity*, I read Mistry’s own reflections on her practice as filmmaker alongside Homi Bhabha’s thoughts on Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*. Bhabha’s insights into Fanon’s writing allows me to appraise Mistry’s investment in representations of whiteness as a curiosity about whiteness, and a yearning to bridge the racial gap.

My analysis of the rape scene in *Impunity* borrows from Amanda Spallacci’s writing on representations of rape and trauma in film and television. Spallacci distinguishes between close-ups of the victim and close-ups of the attacker and that these different representations elicit different viewing responses (2019:3). I use Spallacci to understand how the representation determines who the viewer sympathises with. Deleyto’s detailed technical writing on focalisation helps me to identify *how* Mistry represents the scene and whose perspective she favours. Deleyto’s work is a key complementary reading to ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ to understand who is in control of the gaze in both the rape and blue

² *Ouens* is the Afrikaans colloquial word for guys.

wig scenes. I deduce that Mistry foregrounds a perspective that is external to the action over that of either protagonist.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY AND MY RACIALISED POSITIONALITY

Earlier in the introduction, I acknowledged that my position in society influences my reading of the films. In this section, I offer the reader insight into my positionality as a middle-class Black woman, who grew up under apartheid in South Africa. How I am situated in society shapes my usage of terminology that is often problematic, given their origins in the racism of colonialism and apartheid. Zimitri Erasmus states that "... we are embedded in a racialised world," (2017a:xxiii), and that the use of racialised terms in South Africa continues to be contested (2017b:18&21). In addition, Mohamed Adhikari and Erasmus both point out that the South African usage of "coloured" does not always mean "Black", in the same way that it does in the US (Adhikari, 2006:143; Erasmus, 2017b:21). Erasmus further illustrates that even within South Africa, her compatriots' perception of her racialised identity is inconstant as her race is questioned in some regions, but not in others, and that, in other countries she may be racialised as white or mixed (2017b:1-2). These impermanent meanings oblige me to make my position in this "racialised world" in my South African context clear.

Apartheid South Africa classified my family as coloured, but the non-racial philosophy of the anti-apartheid struggle that informed my high school years in the 1980s where our teachers were rumoured to be members of the banned African National Congress (ANC), the Communist Party and the Non-European Unity Movement, left me with no doubt that I was Black. To be Black was, as Steve Biko wrote, "not a matter of pigmentation – being [B]lack is a reflection of a mental attitude," (1978/1971:48). Mohamed Adhikari relates that the ideology of Black Consciousness led many politicised people to reject the label coloured from the late 1970s onward (2006:147). This political approach, defined as Black Consciousness by Biko (1978/1971:48-53), and inspired in me by my high school teachers, is the foundation of my understanding of who I am in South Africa.

I understand myself as Black and the experiences I have as a Black person are tinged by my apartheid classification as coloured, but they are no less Black. Although I identify as Black, in some contexts it may be necessary to position myself as coloured to address the specificity of my experience as a result of apartheid segregation. In 2021, I view the experience of coloured people as a Black post-apartheid experience in the same way as Erasmus when she

questions the continued usage of apartheid categories. Using access to tertiary education along with the means to build and hand down wealth generationally, Erasmus demonstrates that through a shared struggle for these with black South Africans, the experience of people designated coloured under apartheid, continues post-apartheid, to be a [B]lack experience (2012:8-9). Notwithstanding my very middle-class appearance and experience, I am aware that when my parents pass away, my inheritance will not secure my future. I am also constantly aware of living on a very thin and taut line between poverty and middle-class comfort.

Because I understand the experience of coloured people to be a Black experience, I use the capitalised “Black” inclusively to mean those who were classified black, coloured, other coloured, Malay, and all the other strange divisions the apartheid masters identified as not white. When I use the lower case “black,” I use it to refer to people who were classified bantu, confined to homelands, and required to carry passes in order to travel into urban areas under apartheid. In my research, Rozena Maart’s scholarship on the lasting influence of the Black Consciousness movement on the awareness of Black academics (2014) uses “Black” in an inclusive manner. Desiree Lewis, in her essay on the history of media representations that stereotype Black people (2011), uses “black” throughout in an inclusive manner. Zimitri Erasmus, in her explorations and contemplations of the complex nature of South African racialised identities tends to use “black” in an inclusive manner, “coloured” to indicate the particular nature of the group experience and capitalises “Black” and “Coloured” to emphasise that she is using the term (2017a, 2017b, and Erasmus & Pieterse, 1999). In her article with Edgar Pieterse, they explain that for them, the lower case is used in “an anti-essentialist” way (Erasmus & Pieterse, 1999:169). I share with these scholars an inclusive approach to blackness, but as no standard punctuation exists to denote this, I use my own to represent my approach as outlined above.

Notwithstanding my politicisation as a Black person, my classification as a coloured person meant that my experiences were different from those classified as black and living in further flung areas of the Cape Town metropolitan area and in homelands. Unlike these children, I could live closer to the city and its central business district, and it was possible for my parents to do white collar work that allowed us a modicum of middle-class comfort. My parents’ work as a bank official and a teacher also meant that my coloured experience was more middle class than that of coloured peers whose parents were blue collar workers. As a

middle-class family, we could afford a standalone house and not one with walls that were immediately adjacent to our neighbours' like the council houses that are characteristic of many of South Africa's townships.

Apartheid's violence showed me how I was different from others living in the same country, but through my high school education I learnt that I was the same as my compatriots and that our differences were fabricated. Post-1994 and well into the twenty-first century, the term "coloured" has survived into the new South Africa of the twenty-first century (Adhikari, 2006:148). Adhikari attributes this to both attempts by coloured people, post-1994, to reclaim the identity from negative stereotypes, and also to "ethnic mobilisation" seeking to benefit from the new democratic environment of 1994 (2006:148). Because I would like an end to relations based on these artificial differences rooted in colonialism, and which manifest through material inequality, I endeavour, where possible, not to use these terms. When I do use these terms, I attempt to use them in a manner that is inclusive compared to the way they were used under apartheid. As I attempt to write against apartheid, my writing is simultaneously shaped by apartheid as my research wants to recognise the work of South African Black women filmmakers – a group historically marginalised under apartheid and, as I mention above, overlooked by contemporary post-apartheid scholarship. I use racialised terms to clarify when I am referring to a particular Black experience, which in this study is a working-class coloured experience, versus a black experience as shaped by apartheid divisions that continue to impact South African lives in the twenty-first century. My understanding of the racial identities of the filmmakers in this study, is that Dumisa is a Black and black woman filmmaker, while Mistry is a Black woman filmmaker of Indian descent.

RACE IN *NOMMER 37* AND *IMPUNITY*

South Africa's recent history of apartheid racial segregation makes working with racial identities a complex undertaking. First of all, as Erasmus has illustrated, racial identity and terminology are fluid and change according to context (2017b:1-2). Secondly, as hooks notes, it is the distance between groups of people that leads to stereotyped perceptions of communities other than their own (1992b:341). Apartheid created gulfs between groups of people, which means many have little intimate knowledge of other race groups, and that what they do know, they have gleaned from dominant racist media representations, like those Desiree Lewis exposes in her research (2011), which I discuss in chapter one. At this point, it is also worth noting that both filmmakers may be considered outsiders to the communities

they represent in their films. Mistry is a middle-class Black woman of Indian descent, representing a white woman, and Dumisa is a middle-class Black and black woman, who represents a working-class coloured community.

Dumisa sets *Nommer 37* within an environment controlled by menacing gangsters. Adam Haupt reveals the gangster as a dominant stereotype of Black masculinity in South African media representation and argues that this corresponds with the commodification of the Black gangster in Hollywood representations of Black men (2008:378). Dumisa's production company, Gambit Films, has to date shown a preference for stories like *Noem My Skollie* (Call Me Thief) (Joshua, 2016), and *Ellen: Die Ellen Pakkies Storie* (Ellen: The Story of Ellen Pakkies) (Joshua, 2018) that explore the lives of coloured people impacted by gangs. These stereotypical narratives of coloured lives, as per Treffry-Goatley's discussion about stereotypical representations of identities, have an easier time finding an international audience than more complex representations do (2010:210). These gangster stories are seen as more marketable precisely because of their proximity to Hollywood constructions of hard gangster masculinity as Haupt shows (2008).

Referring to the characters in *Nommer 37*, I use "coloured", while bearing in mind that their specific "coloured" experience is a Black experience. The racialised and classed nature of their experiences, shaped by the physical location they reside in, are understood as the continuing effects of apartheid and represented through their working-class position amidst the threat of gangs. Salo demonstrates that despite a post-apartheid democratic state, social mobility that would allow coloured youth interaction with different races, is stymied by a lack of money (2003:359). In chapter one, I delve into Salo's research that describes how these spaces are also gendered.

Mistry's fictional oeuvre comprises many stories of white people and indicates an interest in whiteness. As Mistry unpacks in the essay about her short film, *We Remember Differently* (2005), the imaginations of South Africans of Indian descent are dominated by whiteness (2012b:58). In my chapter on *Impunity*, I explore questions of gender in relation to Mistry's investment in white identities. I do so by drawing on Mistry's own reflections on racial identities in South Africa and on her explorations of these in her film work. With his interpretation of Frantz Fanon's ideas in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Homi Bhabha encourages a consideration of the liminal nature of race relations and suggests the use of this state as the

foundation for transformative race relations. I use Bhabha's approach to understand Mistry's investment in whiteness.

I began this study hoping to explore Black women representing their own lives and experiences, but what I found was something different. Instead, the few Black women who have been able to release a feature, are examining gendered experiences of communities outside of their own immediate experience. This is something that white men have been blithely doing since the advent of filmmaking, and given the limited opportunities that Black women have had to represent themselves, this position as racial outsider is worthy of attention.

OUTLINE

The analysis of *Nommer 37* in chapter one is done as a comparison with Alfred Hitchcock's 1954 thriller, *Rear Window*. This comparison allows me to examine how *Nommer 37* both knowingly borrows from Hollywood and transforms the Hollywood formula to explore gender in the South African context. Mulvey also explicitly studies the gaze in *Rear Window* in 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', which means the similarities between the two films allow me to test how Mulvey's ideas apply in the contemporary South African context. Knowledge of the particular identities in *Nommer 37* is offered by a range of scholars. Adhikari and Western offer an historical framing of stereotypes of coloured people that is relevant for the reader's understanding of the characters in *Nommer 37*. Salo's work offers appreciation of the gendered identities of a particular working-class community on the Cape Flats in Cape Town that is similar to the one represented in *Nommer 37*. Reading Salo's anthropological work together with that of Lugones, Coetzee and du Toit, and Gqola allows me to apprehend the particular inflection of the male gaze in *Nommer 37*. This close study of the scenes brings to light the sexually punitive nature of the gaze in this film.

I show that even though the conceit of both *Nommer 37* and *Rear Window* steers the women into physical activity, and even though the camera travels with Pam (*Nommer 37*) when she crosses the yard to Lawyer's block, that neither of the women has control of the gaze that drives the narrative. Dumisa allows Pam to direct the viewer's gaze in certain scenes, but her subjectivity is confined to her immediate space and more limited than Randal's that sees beyond his immediate surrounds. Moreover, in the contemporary film, the narrative aligns more harshly with patriarchal conventions. I also find that stereotypes of coloured people are

reproduced in the film, and I identify the nature of the gaze in *Nommer 37* as a male gaze of surveillance of the woman.

While the earlier film, the study of *Impunity* follows in chapter two because of the manner in which the film complicates the gaze that regards the woman protagonist. The study of *Impunity* includes a brief review of Mistry's *We Remember Differently* (2005), a short film, and *The Bull on the Roof* (2010). These two films place the race and gender representation in *Impunity* in the historical context of Mistry's filmmaking. The same is not possible with Dumisa's work because *Nommer 37* is her first feature length film, developed from the short of the same title. Mistry's own musings on South African race and identity, considered with her other fiction films, shapes the meaning I make of her position as a Black woman filmmaker and her representations of gender.

My study of *Impunity* focuses on scenes of a sexual nature to establish whether Mistry's use of the camera to represent the middle-class white woman during sexual intimacy moves beyond patriarchal representations. I consider how the unconventional camera placement in these scenes may be aligned with a traditional male gaze. This inquiry also pays attention to the role of the femme fatale, the idea of the performance of femininity, and draws on feminist film theory that demonstrates what happens when a woman is bold enough to assert her gaze in the narrative. The analyses of two scenes in *Impunity* are done in comparison with scenes from other films for insight into Mistry's particular representation of the gaze. I compare the rape scene in *Impunity* with the haunting rape scene in *The Accused* (Kaplan, 1988), and the blue wig scene in *Impunity* with the pink wig scene in the striptease club in *Closer* (Nichols, 2004). The beach sex scene and the scene with the femme fatale are analysed on their own.

My key discovery about the gaze in *Impunity* is that it is positioned externally to the action. This external perspective complicates the interpretation of the gaze, but in the end, it is also a gaze of surveillance as in *Nommer 37*. I further determine that this gaze, while not embodied by the male protagonist, is aligned with a heterosexual male gaze in the way it sexualises the woman and not the man.

This thesis began with my investigation of the gendered nature of the gaze in the representation of the woman protagonists in *Nommer 37* and *Impunity*, and in the conclusion, I discuss how the study reveals overwhelming similarities between the approaches of the two

directors to the representation of their woman leads. Both directors, in keeping with Classical Hollywood convention, curb the gaze of the woman protagonist in favour of a gaze that is identifiable as male. The narratives of both films punish the women brutally for transgressing their prescribed gender roles, with the punishment in *Impunity* being particularly harsh as the woman lead, Echo, dies. The most striking similarity is that the theme of surveillance emerges from both narratives. I conclude that while both Dumisa and Mistry comment on the precarious position of women in society, their reproduction of the patriarchal conventions of Classical Hollywood means that neither offers alternative ways to look at women.

CHAPTER ONE

“EK SAL JOU HEELTYD DOPHOU.” (I’LL BE WATCHING YOU THE WHOLE TIME) WATCHING THE WOMAN IN *NOMMER 37*

“... to see was to know and to know was to have institutional control of the gaze.”
(Corrin Columpar, 2002:34)

“Hence the look, pleasurable in form, can be threatening in content, and it is woman as representation/image that crystallises this paradox.” (Laura Mulvey, 1989a/1975:18)

Nosipho Dumisa’s thriller, *Nommer 37* (2018), set on the Cape Flats in Cape Town, is a film that addresses themes of masculinity and surveillance. Laura Mulvey’s ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ (1989a/1975) serves as the foundation from which I explore the representation of Pam, the female protagonist, in *Nommer 37*. I am particularly interested in the notion of the onscreen heterosexual gendered division of labour expressed through the active male and the passive female (1989a/1975:20). I set out to determine the gendered nature of the gaze the director uses to guide the audience through the narrative. I show how masculinity and surveillance manifest in two kinds of male gazes at the working-class coloured woman protagonist. The first is portrayed as paternalistic and the second includes the threat of a disciplining control of the female lead. I argue that in *Nommer 37*, Dumisa does not merely reproduce the male gaze, but that she uses it to comment on the position of working-class coloured women. I conclude that Dumisa’s critical commentary notwithstanding, the film’s ahistorical presentation serves to uphold stereotypes of working-class coloured people in South Africa and suggest that there is no need to improve the lives of working-class people.

The title of this chapter and of this thesis, “*Ek sal jou heeltyd dophou*,” borrows from the sentence Randal utters when Pam leaves to break into the gangster’s flat for the money that will allegedly rescue them from poverty and debt. This sentence captures the paternalistic care Randal feels towards Pam as he sends her off to the devil’s lair. It also expresses the sinister nature of surveillance of young women by gangsters in communities like the one Pam lives in, and that we see Pam endure. Through the story of Pam and Randal, *Nommer 37*

draws our attention to the gendered power relations at work in the gaze and comments on these power relations through the embattled protagonists.

Before presenting the study, I present a summary of the key ideas I draw from literature, including theories around the gaze and the history of representation of coloured people in South Africa. The analysis of *Nommer 37* is done as a comparison with Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954), and begins by looking at the characterisation of the two women leads, and concludes with a close analysis of the gaze at Pam.

As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, I position myself as a Black woman, whose experience has been, and continues to be, shaped by my apartheid classification as coloured. Following on from my positionality, I use the capitalised "Black" to include the groupings of people marginalised under apartheid. My use of the small "black" refers to those people who were confined to homelands, required to carry passes for travel into cities, and classified as bantu people during apartheid. Using this writing convention, Dumisa is thus a middle-class black and Black woman. As a black woman, Dumisa's experiences may be considered somewhat at a remove from those of the coloured characters she represents in *Nommer 37*, but she shares a gendered positionality with the woman lead and her Blackness with the rest of the characters.

Laura Mulvey explains that when she wrote 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' she was interested in how the spectator is guided to look at the woman onscreen as though they, the spectator, were a (heterosexual) man, regardless of their actual gender (1989b/1981:29) and sexuality. For Mulvey, cinematic conventions "impose masculinity as 'point of view'" (1989b/1981:29). The purpose of this study of *Nommer 37* is to determine whether the heterosexual masculine point of view that Mulvey identified in Classical Hollywood films is "imposed" on the spectator by a Black woman director working within a patriarchal film industry, even in a context that we may surmise is different from that within which *Rear Window* was produced. In doing so, I also consider the ideas of scholars who have challenged and built on Mulvey's in a manner that allows for a broader and more critical application of the male gaze.

THE MANY GAZES

Corinn Columpar identifies the imperial and anthropological gazes that developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and that based their understandings of people they encountered in new lands on *visible* differences. For those involved in the imperial project with its drive to colonise, these visible differences led to assumptions of physical, moral, and cultural inferiority – the foundation of the colonial gaze. Similarly, anthropologists, using the visible differences, fixed people outside of history, before the influence of colonisation and the arrival of anthropologists (Columpar, 2002:36-37), creating the idea of the pure essential person, unaffected by time – the foundation of the ethnographic gaze. Columpar asserts that these gazes work together in cinema to establish the spectator “into a hegemonic viewing position” that is white, male and Western (2002:40). Columpar’s “hegemonic viewing position” provides a framework for understanding the gaze in *Nommer 37* and the stereotyping of the gangsters’ gaze.

bell hooks’s critique of Mulvey’s gaze reveals it as a *white* male gaze with *white* women bearing the gaze (1992a:118&123). Despite this original exclusive nature of Mulvey’s male gaze, hooks also shows that when Black men started making films in the United States, they adopted the traditional male gaze in their representations of Black women (1992a:118). It is worth noting here that *Nommer 37* features a Black male protagonist, and the study sets out to determine whether he, like hooks’s early Black American male filmmakers, also adopts the traditional male gaze and guides viewers through the narrative.

My analysis of the representation of the coloured protagonists in *Nommer 37* also considers the interaction between racial stereotypes and the hegemonic cinematic gaze. “Coloured,” a racial identity that is central to this study, is a contested term in contemporary South Africa (Erasmus, 2017a:xxiii), but still in use, unlike in the United States, where it is currently pejorative and antiquated. John Western (1996) and Mohamed Adhikari (2006) locate the source of stereotypes of coloured people with the colonial history of the Cape Colony. Adhikari explains that racist ideas of racial purity have led to the enduring popular understanding of coloured people as being an impure mixed race (2006:150-152), who have inherited the worst and weakest traits of their ostensibly pure Black and white progenitors (Western, 1996:16-17 & 26; Adhikari, 2006:153). Stereotypes of coloured people as lazy, dirty, criminal, violent, and sexually uncontrolled emerged during the period of colonisation in South Africa (Western, 1996:17,19,24&25; Adhikari, 2006:160).

These original colonial perceptions persist today, and in the analysis I point out how they have been applied to characterisation in *Nommer 37*. I use Desiree Lewis's research into present-day media representations and Janell Hobson's scholarship on stereotypes of Black women in the United States to understand the characterisation of the woman protagonist, Pam, in *Nommer 37*.

Elaine Salo's (2003 & 2007) and Sean Samson's (2007) research with communities that resemble the one the characters in *Nommer 37* belong to provides a South African inflection to my application of the theories of the gaze. Salo's and Samson's research show how women in communities like Pam's are expected to express their sexuality and offer insight into Pam's timid characterisation. Salo also describes that under apartheid, adult working-class coloured women benefited from employment opportunities in textile and food canning factories, while adult men were often unable to find work (2007:167). This position of economic power facilitated the adult women's positions as moral authorities in their working-class communities (Salo, 2007:163 & 167-168). In *Nommer 37*, the couple reflects this apartheid economic situation as Pam, one presumes, has steady work in the city, while Randal turns to petty crime for survival. Despite the economic and social position of women within their communities, Pam's battered body demonstrates that society does not look after those who are vulnerable.

Finally, I draw on Patricia Hill Collins's scholarship on Black women in the American academy (1989 & 2014) for parallels with Dumisa's position as a Black woman filmmaker in an industry dominated by white men. Astrid Treffry-Goatley's insights into the post-apartheid production context and its distribution expectations, shed light on an industry that curtails original representation. I consider that these limitations influence Dumisa's work.

NOMMER 37 AND REAR WINDOW: AN EASY COMPARISON

As mentioned, the analysis of *Nommer 37* will be done in comparison with *Rear Window*. Before exploring their suitability for comparison, I offer a brief synopsis of each.

NOMMER 37 (2018) SYNOPSIS

Randal, a small time criminal, turns to selling drugs to earn the kind of money he has been chasing all his life. During a shootout with drug dealers, he is paralysed from the waist down, putting an end to his dreams of wealth, but not to the debt he owes Emmie. Alone in the flat

he shares with his girlfriend, Pam, he spies on his neighbours with the pair of binoculars she gifts him. Randal decides to blackmail Lawyer, a gangster, with the murder of Lieutenant Meyer in exchange for the cash Lawyer keeps from the dead policeman. After a few unsuccessful attempts to get his hands on the cash, and with the menacing Emmie and Faizel breathing down their necks, Pam finally agrees to break into Lawyer's flat. A fish out of water in Lawyer's world, Pam's life is ultimately in jeopardy.

REAR WINDOW (1954) SYNOPSIS

L.B. Jefferies is a photojournalist confined to a wheelchair in his New York apartment after a work-related accident leaves him temporarily without the use of his one leg. With nothing to do, Jefferies whiles away his time observing the activities of his neighbours from the rear window of his apartment. After several strange comings-and-goings, Jefferies becomes convinced that Thorwald, a man in one of the apartments across the way, has murdered his wife. Jefferies enlists the help of Lisa, his girlfriend, and Stella, his nurse-cum-physiotherapist, to obtain evidence that a murder has been committed.

Despite being about murder, Hitchcock's *Rear Window* is an upbeat film with frequent banter between characters and, for the most part, even lighting that allows the audience to clearly see characters' faces and expressions. *Rear Window*, with its wholesome, well-dressed, upper middle-class protagonists, L.B. Jefferies (James Stewart) and Lisa Fremont (Grace Kelly), its carefree banter, and even lighting panders to a desire that Schrader identifies as occurring post-World War Two, for a wealthier more buoyant version of themselves than was usual in *noir* films (2012:224).

Nommer 37 on the other hand, is a darker work where low-key lighting, that conceals more than it reveals of the characters' faces when they are indoors, prevails, with the constant threat of violence around Randal and the neighbourhood he watches from his seat at the window. The shadows and traditional *noir* low-key lighting literally place our protagonists, Randal Hendricks (Irshaad Ally) and Pam (Monique Rockman), "in the dark," symbolising their inability to see clearly with the windows and the distance between them. The grittier treatment of *Nommer 37* is related to the level of realism the film sets out to achieve in relation to the environment the working-class coloured couple inhabits. In comparison, the more even lighting in *Rear Window* symbolises Jefferies's ability to see easily into the

apartment's across from him and to follow Lisa's movements with more clarity than Randal does Pam's.

Similarities and differences abound in the two films, but my interest is in the representation of the two women leads, namely, Pam in *Nommer 37* and Lisa in *Rear Window*. A comparison between the representation of these two women can illuminate how the twenty-first century filmmaking environment and the South African context influence the way women are represented in film. My interest in *Nommer 37* is due to its being contemporary, South African, and directed by a Black South African woman.

In Dumisa's *Nommer 37* Pam is pivotal to the resolution of the narrative, and thus suited to a study of both the nature of the action and the power of the gaze embodied by the woman. This comparison with *Rear Window* aims to establish whether the film reflects or questions the patriarchal ideas of sexual difference that Mulvey identified as key components of Classical Hollywood films. In 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', Mulvey makes specific reference to *Rear Window* and the fact that the plot hinges on the male gaze (1989a/1975:22-23). *Nommer 37* and *Rear Window*, because of their similarities, allows for a comparison of how Mulvey's gendered division of labour applies to the active and passive roles, as well as to who looks and who is looked at in each film. This comparison depends on South African films drawing on Hollywood genre conventions that include its gendered norms. Their wheelchair confinement limits the physical activity of the men, leaving room for the female protagonist in each film to become active and test the idea of the active man and the passive woman. Through a comparison of the scenes where Pam and Lisa break into the homes of the respective murderers, I explore how both films, but *Nommer 37* in particular, diverge from the traditional active/passive roles and to what extent they reveal a patriarchal form to the narrative, or move beyond this convention. I show that while the movement of the men is restricted, they maintain control of the scopic regime, which compensates for the power to act with the power to see.

UNDERSTANDING PAM'S CHARACTERISATION

To begin this analysis of *Nommer 37* I explore Pam characterisation in comparison with Lisa's and Alicia's³ (Internet Movie Database [iMDB], n.d.), Lawyer's girlfriend. The

³ In the film's credits she is listed simply as "Lawyer's Girl".

comparison with Alicia (Amrain Essop) refers to the scene where Randal watches her getting high (figure three) and she is sexually unrestrained with Lawyer (figure four). This representation of Alicia positions her in contrast to Pam, who is characterised as more modest. Pam conforms to notions of respectable womanhood that Elaine Salo and Sean Samson each uncovers in their research into the lived experiences of women in Manenberg and Hanover Park respectively. Enduring racial and racist stereotypes influence the woman research participants to prefer more modest behaviour that they find respectable, rather than displays of overt sexuality (Salo, 2003; Samson, 2007).

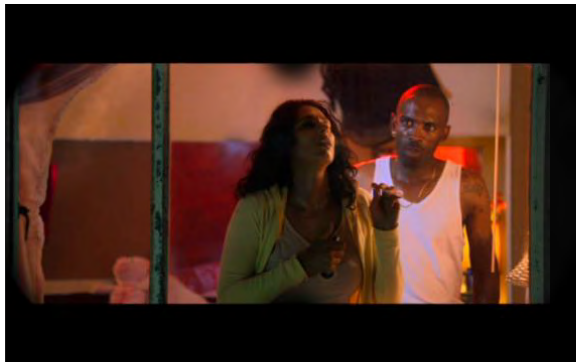


Figure 3. Alicia gets high.

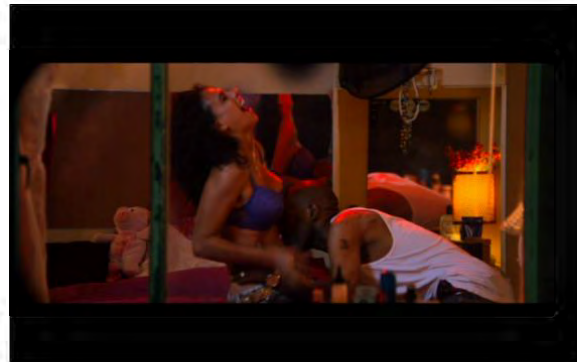


Figure 4. Alicia enjoys sex.

Post-1994, Salo examines young women's responses to racial, cultural, social and gender representation in television programmes, to determine how they position themselves in the nascent society (2003). She discovers that despite changes in South African society, patriarchal ideas of respectable womanhood persist and that young women are expected to conform to these (2003:359). Respectability, or *ordentlikheid*⁴ (Salo, 2003:352; 2007:169), is identified by Salo as a key component of community moral economies (2007:169-171). Samson's research with women in Hanover Park shows a similar sensibility amongst participants with overt sexuality discouraged amongst women belonging to the community and a preference for a local gender identity of women that includes modesty (2007:132-134).

These ideas of respectable womanhood are meant to counter the stereotypes that Lewis's research into contemporary media representations uncovers. Lewis identifies the racist stereotypes of Black men as lecherous, Black women as overly sexual, and white women as sexually pure (2011:199). Similarly, writing about the representation of Black women in the

⁴ *Ordentlikheid* is the Afrikaans word for respectability.

United States, Janell Hobson notes that during slavery, representations of Black women as extraordinarily fertile and grotesque went hand in hand with the idea that unlike white women, Black women were able to perform physical work (Morgan, cited by Hobson, 2005a:12). Angela Davis reminds us that Black women who were enslaved were not only used for physical labour, but also to “breed” future slaves (1983:3). “Breeding” was achieved through sexual intercourse forced by, and also often with, the enslaver (Davis, 1983:3). This was basically rape, but not seen as such because enslaved women were not valued as human (Davis, 1983:3). Pumla Gqola further observes that the history of rape in South Africa, as introduced through slavery, synonymous with colonial conquest and firmly established by the time apartheid was official, was based on the view of Black and enslaved women as sub-human with an extreme appetite for sex (2015:43-50). Legally, rape was recognised as the sexual violation of humans, and because of their non-human status and purported ever-ready sexuality, it was legally impossible to rape a Black or enslaved woman (Gqola, 2015:43).

Physical weakness was a trait that belonged to white women and, with whiteness being the norm, was consequently viewed as the feminine ideal (Hobson, 2005a:12). The respectable woman according to Lewis and Hobson then, is neither overly sexual (Lewis, 2011:199), nor exceptionally fertile (Hobson, 2005a:12), meaning that she can be positioned closer to the physically weak ideal of white femininity that Hobson identifies (2005a:12).

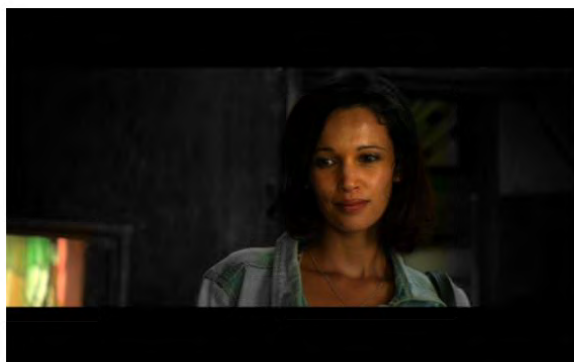


Figure 5. Pam is represented as modestly dressed and timid.

Notions of modesty and respectability are evident in the representation of Pam through her ordinary and not immodest attire (figure five) in the manner that Salo’s and Samson’s research participants expect from respectable young women and her relationship to her physicality, which I discuss later. Pam further conforms to ideas of a young respectable working-class coloured woman as she goes to work, earning a pittance to contribute to her household; she is loyal to her boyfriend, Randal, enduring his surliness as she drives him

home from the hospital; she buys Randal a gift to stave off his boredom; and her desire for Randal is expressed within a stable, long-term relationship. Notably, as Pam recounts moments before she presents Randal with the binoculars, the love between her and Randal began when they were children and was evident when Pam broke her leg and Randal chose to visit her daily and recount stories from the world outside. Their relationship is rooted in childhood, a time traditionally associated with a more innocent love, rather than the lusty teenage hormonal love. The fact that their love began in childhood, signals the purity of their love and Pam's near-Madonna status as Randal may be the only sexual partner she has had. The mother-whore dichotomy is evident in the representation of Pam and Alicia, with Pam's respectability confirmed by this contrast. This comparison between Pam and Alicia shows that the creators of *Nommer 37* position Pam, the heroine, closer to the stereotype of Hobson's wholesome white woman (2005a).

Bearing the stereotypes and ideas of respectability in mind, I consider the characterisation of the two leading women – Pam (*Nommer 37*) and Lisa (*Rear Window*). Through the comparison with *Rear Window*, I observe that Pam and Lisa are characterised differently, with Pam represented as more timid than Lisa, who decides of her own accord that she will break into the alleged murderer's apartment to secure evidence of the murder. Tania Modleski notes that Lisa is a visually dominant character, often towering over Jefferies in his wheelchair, and whose knowledge of women and fashion, and whose experience as a woman is key to proving the murder in the apartment across the way (1988:78). Pam, on the other hand, is reluctant for most of the film to help Randal to get the money from the murdering gangster, Lawyer (David Manuel). She only agrees to help him when they have run out of options and their lives are in imminent danger from the menacing loan shark, Emmie (Danny Ross). *Nommer 37* suggests that in a community that demands strict adherence to patriarchal gendered roles, women may be coerced by economic need and/or by the men close to them to flout the norms. Lisa, from her position of upper-middle class white privilege acts for the sake of adventure, out of curiosity, and to redirect Jefferies's gaze from the neighbours across the way to her (Mulvey, 1989a/1975:23). Pam, from her twenty-first century working-class coloured deprivation and dangerous environment, does not have the luxury of going on an adventure and is forced to act out of necessity and against her better judgement to ensure their survival. The women, as determined by their economic and racial positions in their societies, have different motivations that move them to act.

In order to act, Pam needs to learn a new skill, namely lockpicking. In contrast to Lisa, who is represented as being able to rely on her wits and athleticism, Pam relies on Randal to acquire the knowledge and skills she needs. My interpretation of this is twofold: firstly, that crime is the space of men and before she can enter it, Pam needs to learn something to be able to function in this space. Secondly, that working-class coloured women in twenty-first century South Africa are more constrained and controlled by their patriarchal gender roles than middle-class white American women in the twentieth century. Pam's stepping up to the plate is represented as a series of actions that allows her to come into her own, while Lisa knows what she is capable of and demonstrates an independent spirit that surprises and eventually impresses Jefferies. Pam's resilience, evident in the final scene of the film, is surprising because of her initial fear, her resistance to Randal's plans, and her difficulty learning to pick the lock. Pam's heroism is accentuated by the viewer's awareness of the murderous reputation of gangsters on the Cape Flats and, by the time Pam crosses the yard to Lawyer's, our knowledge of how vicious he is. Once in Lawyer's flat, Pam is a fish out of water and, unsure of herself. She constantly turns to Randal to guide her as to what she needs to do, even as his distance prevents him from doing so. Lisa is the antithesis of Pam, swiftly making her own decisions and only turning to Jefferies to show him her findings. These dissimilar characterisations of two women who fulfil similar roles, prompt a brief exploration of Lisa's more adventurous characterisation.

Lisa decides to enter Thorwald's (the alleged murderer's) flat on her own. She makes this decision while she and Stella are in the yard digging through a bed of flowers, and Jefferies watches through his camera. In figure six, we see Lisa gesture her decision to Jefferies from the yard, her body already turned and heading away from Jefferies towards Thorwald's residence. Hitchcock represents Lisa as daring and independent through this decision and Jefferies as powerless, unable to influence Lisa to change her mind. Earlier that same night, Jefferies was able to caution Lisa and Stella against entering Thorwald's apartment and they heeded his advice. Now, however, the distance between Jefferies and the two women, weakens his influence over them and Lisa is able to use her initiative, making him even more powerless than he has been without the use of his one leg. In 1950s America, when the relentless message to women from popular magazines was that the most meaningful expression of their femininity was in the home as mothers (Friedan, 1963:38 & 39), Hitchcock appears to be complicating this. Jefferies, the man, remains in the domestic space,

while the women leave this space and undertake physical and adventurous activities that are traditionally the domain of men.



Figure 6. Lisa decides to break into Thorwald's apartment.

Earlier in the narrative, Jefferies also expresses concern that Lisa, because of her interest in fashion (underscored by Jefferies's question, "Is this the Lisa Fremont who never wears the same dress twice?") and her enjoyment of high society, is not a suitable companion for his itinerant lifestyle as a photojournalist. Jefferies believes that what Lisa is accustomed to will make the unpredictable, challenging, and exotic encounters of his profession unbearable for her. However, we see Lisa clamber over the garden wall, up the fire escape, and in a display of physical prowess, climb from one window ledge to another without a safety net below her. Whether or not Lisa is doing this to prove Jefferies wrong about her, she is evidently capable of exerting herself physically and prepared to attempt the unfamiliar. Viewers and Jefferies realise that Lisa *is* adventurous after all.

I find insight into Lisa's characterisation from Michelle Abate's history of the appearance of the tomboy in American literature and culture, and its recasting as girl power in the twenty-first century (2008). Abate points out that pale and feeble middle- and upper-class white femininity was allowed to become stronger and more active through the introduction of the tomboy as researchers discovered that this would lead to a healthier white population (2008:xii). Lisa's easy athleticism is an expression of this expanded view of femininity. The upper-class white woman is consequently more confident about pushing her gendered boundaries than the working-class coloured woman.

Stereotypes of the overly sexual and physical Black woman (Lewis, 2011:199; Hobson, 2005a:12) are at work in working-class coloured communities in South Africa that, as Salo (2003 & 2007) and Samson (2007) show, place women under pressure to perform a gendered

identity that positions them closer to the feminine ideal of white womanhood. Pam's teenage years would thus have required her to abandon her childhood soccer-playing with Randal and behave in a fashion to demonstrate her femininity and, by extension, her readiness for marriage and motherhood. Respectability would require Pam to discard any physical activity unbecoming of a respectable woman, leaving her inept in the moment when this kind of activity is required of her. Dumisa shows us then that despite living in a period where she ostensibly has more freedom of movement and more freedom to be the person she would like to be, that within her working-class coloured community, who she can be and *how* she can be is profoundly shaped by her race and class. Lisa on the other hand, upper-middle class and white is the ideal woman and does not experience the same pressure to demonstrate her femininity and is therefore at liberty to push the boundaries of her gender.

Dumisa and Hitchcock characterise the women in accordance with the mores of accepted women's behaviour of their time and place. Notably, however, the time during which *Nommer 37* is set is one during which women, in theory, have access to greater freedoms than the period during which *Rear Window* is set. Lisa's confidence and independence versus Pam's timidity and uncertainty, however, contradict this view of the different periods. While this may be a simple personality difference, *Nommer 37* also illustrates that a working-class coloured woman's experience and understanding of how to use her body, is contingent upon her particular context.

While Lisa's athleticism suggests she has command of the use of her body, ultimately, she uses her wits when she comes face-to-face with the villain. Furthermore, Lisa's athleticism does not throw her femininity into question, because as Hobson shows, as a white woman, she is imbued with femininity by default and does not have to prove this (2005b:121). Pam, however, engages in a physical fight with Spook and although we do not see her deliver the blow that kills him, Dumisa makes the physical nature of the confrontation clear. The narrative up to this point of the fight, has also demonstrated that as a crafty member of Lawyer's gang and his familiarity with physical violence, Spook clearly has the upper hand in the confrontation because of his physical strength and cunning. This is why Pam's survival is a surprise triumph. Pam is more physical than Lisa, who despite her athleticism, relies on her smarts when in trouble. The characterisation of the two women, positions Pam as the physical Black woman, in comparison to the less physical and more cerebral white woman. At the same time, of the Black women in *Nommer 37*, Pam is the one who, through her

modest dress, timidity, and respectable sexuality, is also positioned closer to white femininity and, therefore, allowed to be our heroic protagonist. *Nommer 37* shows through its female protagonist that not only is Pam's twenty-first century world patriarchal, but that the patriarchal constraints of her life are determined by race and class. Were she positioned further from white womanhood, through a darker skin and a more obvious sexuality like Alicia's, Pam would not be allowed to save the day, and if she did, she would probably not be alive at the end of the film.

KEEPING WATCH

Pam enacts another version of modesty in the scene where she walks between her flat and Warren's in the film's second act. The two gang members observe Pam as she passes by with the dirt bag. Notably, as she draws level with them, she casts her gaze downwards (figure seven), ceding control of her environment and of her body to the men watching her. Pam, the good girl, as Williams has argued, is not allowed to look (1984:561), and her actions demonstrate that she *is* a good girl. Once she has passed the gangsters, she looks up (figure eight), asserting herself over her environment.

These two frames illustrate Salo's *ouens* policing the neighbourhood streets. Salo finds that young women in particular are watched carefully and not allowed to venture across borders, from one street, patrolled by their local gang, to another (Salo, 2007:170). This is because the identities of young women are tied to those of the respectable older women – a young woman who behaves respectably, confirms the respectability of the older woman/women in her family and network (Salo, 2007:170-171). Moreover, single young women, through marriage and fatherhood, are the route to manhood for single young men – the *ouens* in this case. Were these women to venture beyond the borders of their streets and start relationships with young men from another street or gang, the passage to manhood for local young men becomes harder (Salo, 2007:171). So, young men keep watch over the movements of young women to preserve the respectability of older women in their communities, and to ensure their elevation as men. Salo also asserts that these “ganging practices” (2003:351) allowed young men to perform their own sense of masculinity that the state had denied them through restricting their movement and access to employment (2003:351). It is the practice of men “keeping watch” over the movements of women that is relevant here.

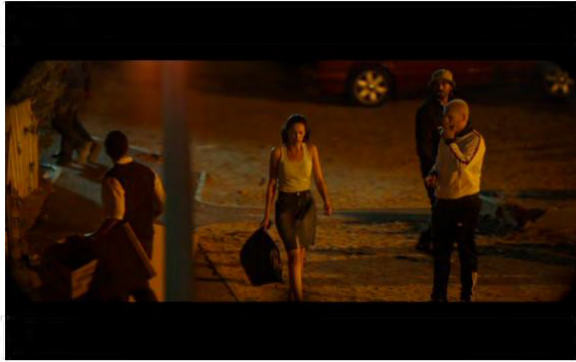


Figure 7. Gang members watch Pam.

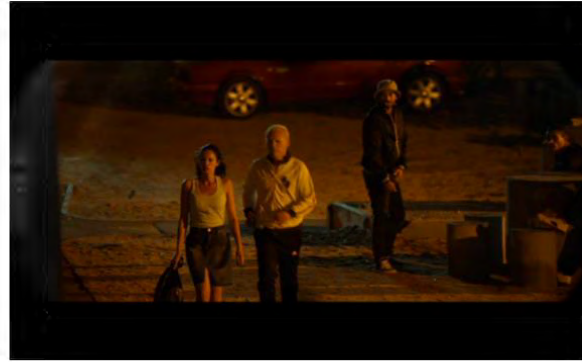


Figure 8. Gang members watch and Pam lifts her gaze.

By watching the young women, the *ouens* know more about their movements and have control of the women. These findings from Salo's anthropological study correspond with Mulvey's argument that men onscreen and those in the cinema watching gain control over the onscreen women through this watching (1989a/1975:16). Reading Salo alongside Coetzee and Du Toit helps me to identify a more predatory nature to the control of the gangster's gaze in this scene.

Coetzee and Du Toit reference Nigerian sociologist Oyèrónké Oyēwùmí and Argentinian philosopher María Lugones to draw a straight line from the imposition of binary genders during colonisation as the foundation of stereotypical ideas around Blackness and Black sexuality during colonialism to sexual violence in South Africa today (2018). Because Black women did not conform to the western colonisers' ideas of how a woman should behave, the supposed licentiousness of Black women, their animal sexuality, their subhuman status, the utility of their bodies for breeding during slavery (Davis, 1983:3), along with their Blackness, excluded them from humanity (Coetzee & Du Toit, 2018:220). They emphasise Gqola's point that this view of Black women is discernible in attitudes towards Black and working-class women today (Gqola, 2015:50; Coetzee & Du Toit, 2018:220). Coetzee and Du Toit declare that these attitudes towards Black women are entrenched in a legal system that, founded on colonial stereotypes, believes that their purported sexual deviance means it is impossible to rape the descendants of Black and enslaved woman today (2018:221). The descendants of these woman in the twenty-first century are still seen as sub-human and their rape is not seen as the rape of a human being in the same way as the rape of a white woman (Coetzee & Du Toit, 2018:223). Coetzee and Du Toit thus deduce that Black women remain vulnerable because of this colonial legacy (2018:223).

In this short scene, the gangsters use their gaze as *the keepers* of the young woman, Pam. Their gaze includes the threat of losing respectability, and the fear of sexual force were she to contravene the community's mores. Salo's work, read alongside Coetzee and Du Toit's, serves to enhance our understanding of how the male gaze may occur in South Africa. This particular gaze of the South African Black man, rooted in colonialism, adopts the white patriarchal gaze with a more overt predatory element than Mulvey identified in Classical Hollywood films, and subjects the woman to strict rules of behaviour, under threat of losing respectability and sexual violence.

During this brief scene of just over one minute long and without audible dialogue, Dumisa represents the constraining nature of the gangsters' gaze over Pam's movement. This scene illustrates the convergence of Salo's and Coetzee and Du Toit's work as two coloured men employ the colonial patriarchal gaze (Coetzee & Du Toit, 2018) in their role as *ouens*, policing the movements of young women (Salo, 2007). Dumisa depicts a contemporary predatory and controlling performance of masculinity rooted in colonialism. Although Mulvey was talking in psychoanalytic terms about the development of desire in the quote at the start of this chapter, it gains extra significance with this interpretation of the gangsters watching Pam.

The presence of this gaze in the film also complicates Dumisa's message. The audience is directed to notice this gaze within its localised context of the narrative without an understanding of its colonial roots. Attaching this menacing gaze to the representation of the gangsters that aligns with the stereotypes of coloured people as lazy, criminal, and violent (Western, 1996:17,19,24&25; Adhikari, 2006:160), suggests that this kind of gaze belongs with these kinds of people. This representation does not situate this gaze as the continuation of systemic patriarchal oppression but isolates it as unique to the gangsters of the Cape Flats. In Columpar's discussion of the history of the racialised gaze, she develops the argument that, what she refers to as "ethnographic cinema" (2002:36), rooted in racist anthropological and colonial ideas represents the Black person as outside of history, with a fixed nature, without agency, and without a voice (2002:36) and in so doing, presents a "type" (2002:36). In this way, the predatory gaze of the gangsters may be read as an example of the "type" of "regressive savagery" – an essential trait of Blackness (Columpar, 2002:39), that distinguishes this Black male gaze from the evolved white male gaze. The distinction serves as an example of the stereotype of coloured people as violent that Western identifies

(1996:24), and the lecherous nature of Black men that Lewis points out (2011:199). In viewing the gangsters, the viewers are placed in the position of Columpar's "hegemonic viewing position" that is white, male and Western (2002:40). In isolation, the gangster's gaze runs the risk of being understood in terms of these stereotypes as inherent to coloured men and as a problematic patriarchal gaze that needs to be challenged within this specific environment, rather than at the broader level of a patriarchal society founded on ideas of gender and race rooted in colonialism.

GAZING IN *REAR WINDOW*

My approach as I examine the representation of the women protagonists, is to ascertain how camera placement and framing position spectators to gaze at the women, or stated differently, whose perspective viewers are encouraged to adopt when looking at the women onscreen. I analyse the gaze at Lisa in *Rear Window* to establish similarities and differences in this regard, between the two films and ascertain whether Hitchcock extends his unconventional positioning of the active woman to the control of the gaze, too.

Beginning with Lisa climbing through the lounge window into Thorwald's apartment, the viewer first sees Jefferies looking towards Thorwald's apartment in figure nine, followed by his perspective in figure ten of what he is looking at. While Jefferies is not using his camera to watch Lisa in this moment, we still see the action from his perspective, or as if we were standing next to him in his room. As soon as Lisa jumps down into the lounge, Hitchcock cuts to Jefferies and shows us through Stewart's performance (figure eleven) that he feels helpless and frustrated at being unable to stop her escapade. Hitchcock uses glance-object editing to, according to Fawell, tell us what to think (2001:42). He positions the camera "inside" Jefferies to give viewers Jefferies's perspective on Lisa climbing through the window (figure ten) and positions the camera "outside" Jefferies to show viewers Jefferies's response to her climbing (figure eleven) and to guide the viewer's response to follow suit (Fawell, 2001:42). While Jefferies views Lisa from a distance in this instance, and his perspective of her is shown as a wide shot, the technique of glance-object editing makes it clear that Jefferies controls the gaze in this sequence. Jefferies's perspective and subjectivity guide the viewer's response.



Figure 9. Jefferies sees Lisa climb the fire escape.



Figure 10. Lisa climbs through the window into Thorwald's flat.



Figure 11. Jefferies's helpless frustration at being unable to stop Lisa.

With the arrival of the police at Thorwald's apartment, Stella and Jefferies watch the action together (figure twelve). The next shot, figure thirteen, shows the viewer what Jefferies and Stella are looking at, and while it is a closer perspective than in figure ten, it is a close-up from Jefferies's perspective, not Stella's. We know this because Stella is using binoculars and were the shot from her perspective, the artefacts in the frame would represent the double lens of the binoculars; instead, they signal the single lens of the camera. While our viewing of Lisa inside Thorwald's apartment is always from Jefferies's perspective, Jefferies is not always using his camera to observe Lisa. Hitchcock is careful to show the viewer when Jefferies raises the camera to his eye for a better look, before cutting to the shot that brings Lisa closer to Jefferies and to the viewer (figures thirteen and fifteen). The shots through the camera lens are recognisable through the black artefacts around the edge of the frame and also through the viewer's proximity to the action in the apartment across the way. The shots representing Jefferies's perspective with the naked eye are wide shots as in figures ten and fourteen. This analysis of Jefferies's and Stella's watching, reveals that Hitchcock always represents the action from Jefferies's perspective.



Figure 12. Stella and Jefferies watch events across the way.



Figure 13. Jefferies's view of events across the way.



Figure 14. Lisa as seen with Jefferies's naked eye.



Figure 15. Jefferies watches Lisa through the camera lens.

In contradiction to Mulvey's claim that "[a]n active/passive heterosexual division of labour has similarly controlled narrative structure" in film (1989a/1975:20), the two scenes analysed above, show Lisa and Stella as physically active and independent minded, and Jefferies as passive and ineffectual. Where the scenes do align with Mulvey's ideas, however, is that the man has active control of the gaze. We see the action from Jefferies's perspective, and through his gaze viewers are guided to see only what he sees and to share his feelings and reactions to events. In this way, and in keeping with Mulvey's theory of the gaze, a heterosexual male gaze is imposed on the audience of *Rear Window* as they regard the woman protagonist. Below, I illustrate that even though the camera is more mobile and less attached to the male lead, a similar heterosexual male gaze is established for the viewer of *Nommer 37*.

GAZING IN *NOMMER 37*

In contrast to *Rear Window*, in *Nommer 37*, I have shown that Pam is represented as less adventurous than Lisa. Pam's response to the threat of Emmie suggests that she is scared and

that she finally gives in to Randal's plan only because they have run out of options and she has become their only hope.

Instead of breaking into Lawyer's flat himself, Randal has to hand over this activity to Pam. In doing so, he is also handing over some of his agency as he has to trust that Pam will know what to do and that she will succeed. He tries to maintain some kind of control and the semblance of action when he says to Pam before she leaves, "*Ek sal jou heeltyd dophou.*" (I'll be watching you the whole time.) This sentence, while paternalistically suggesting that Pam needs Randal to watch over her in order for her to be safe, also recalls the controlling gaze used by street gangs on the Cape Flats to surveil the movements of young women. "*Ek sal jou heeltyd dophou,*" with its intimations of partnership, protection, and surveillance, allows Randal to assert a masculinity aligned with that of the ambulatory men on the street outside his window. Randal's attempt to hold onto control is ultimately thwarted by circumstance, allowing Pam to come into her own, and the viewer to realise that she is able to take care of herself without Randal constantly showing her the way. Here Dumisa conveys that the working-class coloured woman can take care of herself independently of the working-class coloured man.

Pam breaks into Lawyer's flat using the new skill of lock picking she acquired a few hours earlier. As she enters the flat, the camera is positioned inside (figure sixteen), and she is visible to viewers, but not to Randal. At this point, she has also ended the phone call between herself and Randal, to be better able to pick the lock to the flat. Randal can neither see nor hear Pam and is ignorant about what she is experiencing. Later in the flat, when Pam confronts Spook (figure seventeen), the camera is once again in the room with her, offering viewers a perspective of events that incorporates her experience. The window that appears in shots that foreground Randal's perspective, is absent from this scene, signalling the camera's presence in the same space as Pam. The missing window gives viewers a clearer view of the encounter between Pam and Spook, but Randal is deprived of this perspective. Fawell points out that Hitchcock's camera remains with Jefferies throughout the film, except when the dog dies (2001:46-48). Fawell asserts that the camera only leaves Jefferies in this scene to comment on the lack of neighbourliness amongst the neighbours (Fawell, 2001:47). Unlike Hitchcock, Dumisa ventures across the courtyard with Pam, instead of remaining confined to the flat with Randal. In leaving Randal behind in his wheelchair, Dumisa offers the viewer access to more information than Randal has. By leaving Randal ignorant in some scenes,

Dumisa suggests that his scopic power is limited and that without it, because of his literal immobility, he is powerless.

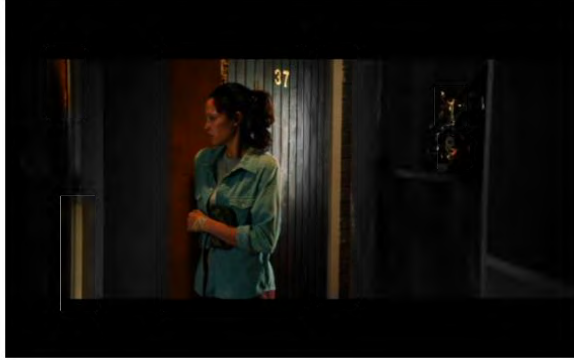


Figure 16. Pam enters Lawyer's flat as the camera observes her from inside his flat.



Figure 17. The camera in the room with Pam as she trains the gun on Spook.

Returning to the scene of Lisa in Thorwald's apartment in *Rear Window*, we see that Jefferies also has limited visual power. Lisa disappears briefly from view a few times, leaving Jefferies unable to know what is happening with her. Jefferies is also unable to help Lisa when she is being manhandled by Thorwald. In different contexts, the upper-middle class white man and the working-class coloured man are equally ineffectual through their immobility and limited scopic powers. Despite their designation as saviours in society and in film, as identified by Mulvey, neither of them is able to fulfill this prescribed role. Through this representation of Randal, and in comparison with Jefferies, Dumisa illustrates that the role of men in different societies has not changed much over time. Both men represent the continued alignment of masculinity with the drive to protect and intervene.

In an earlier scene, also in the third act, Dumisa grants viewers access to Lieutenant February's visit to Lawyer when the blinds are drawn across his window and one is unable to see what transpires inside, while spying from the outside. From February's visit onwards Dumisa occasionally shows the viewer a perspective that Randal does not have. In the paragraph above, we saw that the two male protagonists are positioned similarly in their societies. A closer consideration of the attachment of the camera to the man and his immediate environment in each film, reveals, through its more predictable attachment to him, that the upper-middle class white man in 1950s America is afforded more control over the gaze, intimating that his gaze is valued more than that of the working-class coloured man. These representations suggest that more can be said about masculinity through a comparison of the films, but that is beyond the scope of this research.

Critically, what Randal can see that Pam cannot when she enters the flat in figure sixteen, is that Spook is also inside the flat (figure eighteen). Dumisa switches between Pam's and Randal's perspectives to heighten the tension as viewers alternate between seeing something that Pam does not and seeing something that Randal does not. For most of the film, Randal has had more information about their situation than Pam, but with the inclusion of Pam's perspective, Pam now sees, and therefore knows things that Randal does not. Without this knowledge that Pam has, Randal's powerlessness is amplified as he struggles to see details that could impact the outcome of events.



Figure 18. Spook opens the blinds in Lawyer's bedroom.



Figure 19. Randal's perspective of Pam and Spook through the window and through binoculars.

Once Pam re-establishes cell phone contact with him, Randal is able to act as her eyes and communicate what is happening in the adjacent rooms of the flat and warn her about approaching danger. In order to carry the money and the gun, however, Pam is forced to place her phone in her pocket, ending communication with Randal yet again. Her confrontation with Spook follows, which Dumisa represents from both Pam's immediate (figure seventeen) and Randal's remote (figure nineteen) perspectives. The glass of the window and of the binoculars are literal barriers between Randal and Pam that interfere with his and the viewer's ability to clearly see what is happening and underscore the distance between the couple. His inability to be with Pam, means he is unable to intervene and help her, which, based on the patriarchal requirement for the man to be physically active, is the ultimate emasculation. These glass and window barriers drive home, not only his medical paralysis from the waist down, but also Randal's masculine paralysis through his inability to act and cross the yard to help Pam. Dumisa's positioning of the camera in this crucial scene repeatedly emphasises Randal's remoteness and paralysis. This is first of all a literal paralysis, but also suggests a masculinity that can only standby and watch as bad things happen around him. Being wheelchair-bound has more serious repercussions for Randal in

Nommer 37 than for Jefferies in *Rear Window*, suggesting not only a masculinity that is more afflicted and subjugated in *Nommer 37*, but as alluded to by the visible barrier of the window, also an awareness of this position.

This scene analysis illustrates that Pam takes on the role of the active character as she acts to save herself and Randal in *Nommer 37*. Unlike in *Rear Window*, Dumisa lets the camera travel with the active woman, allowing Pam's subjectivity, rather than Randal's, to direct the viewer's attention in certain moments. This camera that is not restricted to Randal's point of view, is a progression from the earlier model described in *Rear Window*, where the camera stays with Jefferies. This more varied perspective on action represents a decentring of male power over the gaze.

Linda Williams's insights in 'When the Woman Looks', urges closer consideration of this decentring of the male gaze. Williams points out in her reading of the horror film, *Dressed to Kill* (De Palma, 1980), that the woman's look is obstructed and that she is unable to clearly see the man she is pursuing (1984:574). While *Nommer 37* is not a horror, Pam's look within the diegesis is similarly imperfect as her ability to see does not allow her to see that which endangers her. On her entry into the flat, for example, she is unable to see that Spook is also inside, and later, once she has killed Spook and has the money, she does not see that Lawyer has returned and is making his way inside. Randal's gaze ascertains both these facts and conveys this knowledge to the viewer.

Pam's look, once inside Lawyer's flat, may be characterised in two ways: firstly, she is often represented looking through the window to Randal, which is a look that establishes contact in a manner that may be read as looking for reassurance and guidance as in figures twenty and twenty-one. Although the viewer sees Pam looking in these shots, we see her looking from Randal's perspective and there is the obstruction of the window between the viewer and Pam. In contrast, when we see Randal looking, we are in his immediate environment, as in figure twenty-two. Furthermore, while we see Pam looking, we do not see her perspective of what she is looking at. Thus, Randal is not required to "bear" Pam's gaze, and she cannot be said to be directing the viewer's gaze. These shots of Pam looking confirm that Randal is watching her, that he knows what is happening to her, and that he is directing the viewer's gaze. Secondly, when Pam's look does direct the viewer's gaze to the interior of the flat, it is descriptive as it shows us the details of her restricted environment and of the scene as in

figure seventeen above. Randal's look, in contrast, is more powerful and expansive because it shows us the world beyond his window that contains information that contributes towards the development of the plot and that could save Pam's life. Unlike Pam's, Randal's gaze is not confined to the immediate space within which he finds himself. We see this in figure eighteen, when Randal witnesses Spook's presence in the room adjacent to the one Pam is in. Randal encounters the danger first as he *sees* it, while Pam's encounter with the threat is as it appears in the same space as her. Pam's impaired vision and subsequent ignorance of her environment adds to the suspense of the scene. At times Randal is unable to see what Pam sees, but what he *does* see, is crucial to Pam's safety and would afford him the chance to protect her were they in telephone contact. Randal's need to watch over Pam, even at this remove, allows him an embattled sense of power as he has knowledge, although he is unable to use it.

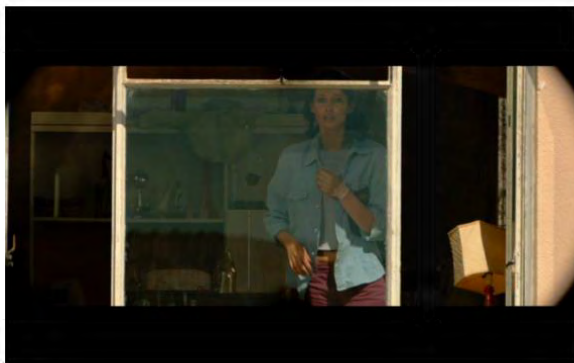


Figure 20. Pam looks to Randal after entering Lawyer's flat and opening the blinds.

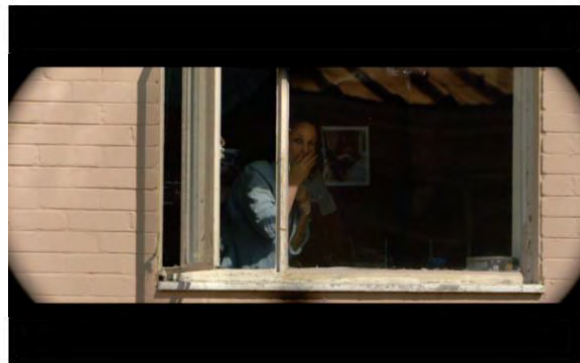


Figure 21. Pam looks to Randal after she finds a dead body in the cupboard.

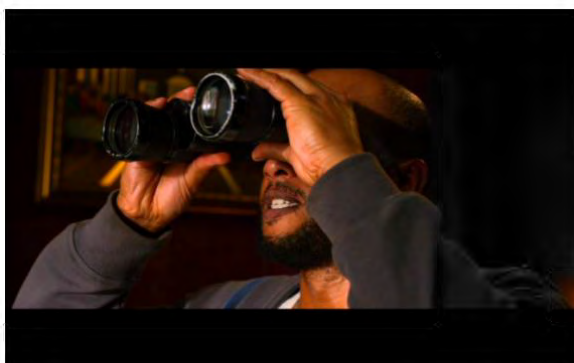


Figure 22. Randal looks.

The analysis of this scene shows, similarly to *Rear Window*, that even though the woman is the active character with the appearance of a controlling gaze, that the gaze of the man is the one with control over what the audience sees and knows.

PAM PAYS THE PRICE

In addition to her imperfect look, as mentioned elsewhere, Pam's body is the second bloodiest body in the film. The bloodiest body in the film establishes Emmie's vicious nature as he tortures a man in the first scene. Fawell notes with *Rear Window* that Jefferies is punished for his voyeuristic misdemeanours when Thorwald throws him out of the window and he breaks his other leg (2001:47). In *Nommer 37*, however, Pam is the one who is most brutally punished for the indiscretions of the male lead. This does not only happen in the third act, it happens at the end of the second act, too, when Pam and Randal lie and tell Emmie that they have done a job and have his money. They explain that they have been unable to collect the money because of the heavy police presence at the block. Emmie decides to believe them, but as interest (his words) on the debt, he has Faizel cut off Pam's finger.

Randal is beaten in this scene, but the violence inflicted on Pam's body is more brutal and mutilates her. While Randal is the one who has reneged on his deal with Emmie, Pam bears the brunt of the punishment. In other words, Pam is disfigured in order to punish Randal. Pam's disfigurement reminds her and Randal that Emmie is not to be trifled with and it also reminds Randal that he is helpless to protect Pam from Emmie. The severed finger, although we do not see it, is a miniature phallus that insinuates Randal's emasculation.

This calls to mind the severed finger in *The Piano* (Campion, 1993), when Alisdair chops off Ada's finger when she tries to courier a piano key to George as a symbol of her love for him. The miniature finger-phallus in this instance, is symbolic of Ada losing her power to do as she pleases, and Alisdair reasserting his power over her. In Ana Lily Amirpour's 2014 horror, *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, we encounter another severed finger when the slimy pimp has his finger bitten off by the woman vampire. This dismemberment is punishment for his bad behaviour towards others. In all three films, severing the finger denotes punishment and that the person who does the cutting is asserting control. What stands out from this brief comparison, is that Pam is the only character punished for someone else's errant ways. Also, in the final scene and the second last shot of *Nommer 37*, Pam's bloodied body (figure twenty-three) is a graphic reminder of Randal's inability to protect her. Randal's powerlessness is repeatedly demonstrated through the spectacle of Pam's mutilated body illustrating Linda Williams's theory that the female body is the site of severe emotion (2012:161-162).



Figure 23. Pam survives.

Not only does Pam's brutalised body signify Randal's impotence, it also illustrates that a woman, as Williams explains, who dares to take on the active masculine role and dares to look, despite an impaired gaze, will be punished (1984:570). This brings us back to Laura Mulvey, who illustrated how traditional Hollywood cinema from the 1930s to the 1950s empowered male characters onscreen to do the looking, while the female characters were largely there to be looked at (1989a/1975). Following on from this crux of Mulvey's work, scholars who engage with the gendered nature of the look in cinema, show how onscreen women who have the gall to look are somehow tainted, punished, or killed.

As Mary Anne Doane expounds, women who look are appropriating the power of seeing and may see the world differently to the way men see it, and show this different perspective to the viewer, which makes them a threat to the status quo (1991b/1982:27). Doane concludes that women who dare to be the subject of the gaze end up dead (1991b/1982:28). In *Nommer 37*, Pam is punished because she uses her power and in doing so, threatens to topple Randal and the other men in the film from their positions of physical and social power. Although Pam is not a standard *noir* femme fatale, she behaves like a man by being active and by directing the viewer's gaze – however limited. While Pam does not end up dead – perhaps because she is rarely the subject of the gaze, and because Dumisa curbs her vision – , she is brutally punished and her body is visibly the site of this violence.

Nommer 37 illustrates that while the society prescribes the way women may behave, as per Salo's and Samson's work around gender identities, it provides minimal support and does not make up for any deficit that results when women adhere to their roles. With Randal's paralysis, he regrets early in the film that, "*Ek kan nie meer agter jou kyk nie,*" (I can't look after you any longer). Although Pam counters that she has never expected him to look after

her, the couple now has to contend with having only one income for two of them to live off of. In this situation, there is a lack of support for Pam from her society, as the burden to support her household increases. Furthermore, when this lack of support forces women to behave in ways not condoned by their society, they are punished, rather than celebrated for their resourcefulness that keeps them alive. As we see in *Nommer 37*, even though Pam saves the day, her battered body is the reward for her effort. Dumisa represents Pam's brutalisation as a victory for the couple when she has Pam utter the final words of the film, "*Ek's okay. Ek's okay.*" (I'm okay. I'm okay.) This ending suggests that survival is enough and there is no need to address the couple's economic deprivation that leads to her brutalisation.

CONCLUSION

This close comparative analysis sets out to determine the gendered nature of the gaze in *Nommer 37*. I have shown that, as in *Rear Window*, the woman, Pam is actively in pursuit of the narrative goal. Although Pam is the active character, she is not actively in control of the gaze. Her body bears the gaze, while Randal's does not. I establish that the gaze at Pam is a heterosexual male gaze that places the spectator in Columpar's "hegemonic viewing position" and is in keeping with Hollywood convention. Dumisa reproduces the patriarchal language of Classical Hollywood cinema in two further notable ways. Pam's modest characterisation positions her as a "good girl" and closer to white femininity, which allows for her heroism in the narrative. Secondly, Pam's brutalisation is in keeping with Hollywood conventions that punish women who transgress their passive gender roles.

This close analysis shows that Dumisa does impose a male gaze on the viewer, but that she also modifies the traditional male gaze with its inflection of paternalistic and predatory surveillance. These subtle modifications of the male gaze show awareness and intention rather than straightforward acceptance and reproduction of patriarchal conventions. Through her use of these gazes, Dumisa draws audience attention to the position of working-class coloured women on the Cape Flats in the contemporary context of the film.

The narrative, however, isolates this surveilling gaze to the Cape Flats without connecting it to its colonial history. This representation of the gaze serves to support stereotypes of violent coloured men and promotes the surveilling gaze as intrinsic to coloured men.

Dumisa's use of Classical Hollywood conventions needs to be understood in terms of the expressive tools and spaces that are available to Black women within specific contexts and industries. I turn to Patricia Hill Collins's work on Black feminist thought in academia (1989; 2014), to contextualise Dumisa's largely conventional use of the cinematic apparatus. Collins shows that in order to maintain the supremacy of white ideas, the system denies that Black women could have any valuable ideas of their own, (Collins, 2014:5) especially where these ideas challenge existing epistemologies that entrench white male dominance (Collins, 1989:749-755; 2014:6 & 15-17). Black women, who are granted access to academic positions are coerced to promote hegemonic epistemologies and are "... likely to be rewarded by their institutions, often at significant personal cost" (1989:753). The reward that Collins alludes to in her 1989 text is clarified in her 2014 book as that of being admitted as an academic "insider" (2014:12). Structural machinations that are similar to those that purposefully suppress the ideas of Black women and render them invisible in favour of epistemologies and ideologies that favour the dominance of white men in American academia (Collins, 1989:753; 2014:3), may be at work in South African film. These structures may censure representation that challenges the patriarchal conventions of Classical Hollywood cinema, thus making it difficult for Dumisa to reject them and obliging her to use them in her efforts to be recognised as a South African filmmaker. Astrid Treffry-Goatley argues in her study into post-apartheid cinema in South Africa that the Hollywood mode of production and expectations of an international audience lead filmmakers to represent stereotypical rather than fresh South African identities in film (2010:210). Reading Treffry-Goatley and Collins together, suggests that fresh representations of gender and racial identities may be difficult for Black woman directors in South Africa to realise. This question may be explored further in a producer study that focuses specifically on women filmmakers, and I hope this is an avenue of future research on Black woman filmmakers in South Africa.

In *Nommer 37*, Dumisa is constrained by these structures, but is able to work within them, skilfully using the cinematic apparatus to alert the audience to the reality of working-class women on the Cape Flats. However, she is unable to extricate this representation from persisting stereotypes. Dumisa's representation of Pam aligns closely with the genre conventions of Classical Hollywood cinema and its gender norms. The alignment of genre conventions with patriarchal looking that I have pointed out in this study, does not mean a revisionist use of genre is not possible, simply that Dumisa does not realise this in *Nommer 37*.

In conclusion, I have shown that a “hegemonic viewing position” has been tenacious and has endured in South Africa, with variations that match the specific milieu at the intersections of race, gender, and class. I have applied Laura Mulvey’s theory of the male gaze alongside the work of other film scholars and scholars from other disciplines for a more complex reading of the gaze in *Nommer 37*. I have illustrated that in *Nommer 37* Nosipho Dumisa skilfully modifies the traditional male gaze for an intelligent representation of its idiosyncratic nature on the Cape Flats. Her messages by the end of the film, however, are less incisive as they suggest that there is little need for societal change to improve the lot of working-class women on the Cape Flats.

CHAPTER TWO

“I’VE BEEN WATCHING YOU.”

THE GAZE IN JYOTI MISTRY’S *IMPUNITY*

“Vision and the act of looking are the stuff of which movies are made; when that act is foregrounded, something’s always up.” (B. Ruby Rich, 1993: 56)

In a 2010 interview about *The Bull on the Roof*, Jyoti Mistry contemplates her next work saying, “I’m curious, [...] what would the film look like if I followed the rules more? Would it have a broader appeal?” (“The Mistry of ...”, 2010). This next film in Mistry’s oeuvre is *Impunity*, which was released in 2015. While *The Bull on the Roof* is a poetic film with an experimental narrative structure, *Impunity* presents Mistry’s engagement with genre and more conventional storytelling. Like *Nommer 37* (Dumisa, 2018), discussed in the previous chapter, *Impunity* is a thriller by a Black South African woman director, and thus presents a further opportunity to study the representation of the woman protagonist in the film for insight into the gender of the gaze that directs viewers through the narrative.

This close study of the framing of characters and the position of the camera in strongly gendered scenes in the film shows that Mistry’s use of cinematic language is in some ways in line with convention, while in other ways, it breaks from convention. She adopts the conventional patriarchal language of Classical Hollywood cinema in a number of ways. Firstly, through using a heterosexual male gaze to guide the viewer through the narrative, secondly through positioning the white woman as the bearer of the male-aligned gaze, and finally through her representation of the woman protagonist, who performs femininity to reassure and mislead the male gaze. Mistry’s atypical application of cinematic language is evident as she foregrounds neither protagonist’s subjectivity, instead choosing a perspective situated outside of the action to lead the viewer through the narrative. This external perspective suggests surveillance and implicates the viewer in the surveillance of the woman, who performs reassuring femininities for the surveilling male gaze. I conclude that while Mistry comments on the violence of the surveilling gaze at the woman, and implicates the

viewer in this violence, she does not present alternative ways of looking at women. This lack of options ultimately upholds patriarchal ways of regarding women.

This chapter presents a close textual analysis of four scenes from the film that centre gender in order to consider the gaze at the woman protagonist. I examine scenes that feature sexual intimacy, desire, and sexual violence. I compare the framing of the action in the *Impunity* rape scene to that in the harrowing rape scene in *The Accused* (Kaplan, 1988), while the analysis of the blue wig scene is done in comparison with the pink wig scene in *Closer* (Mike Nichols, 2004). In this study of the cinematic language employed in *Impunity*, the key theories I draw on include those of feminist theorists Mary Anne Doane and Linda Williams alongside Laura Mulvey to understand the gendered nature of the gaze in the film.

SOME BACKGROUND ON *IMPUNITY*

Impunity is a crime/thriller film that tells the story of the murderous couple, Echo and Derren, who meet in the bar where Echo works as a waitress. That same night, the bar owner attempts to rape Echo, and Echo and Derren exact revenge by murdering him and fleeing in his car. The two are thus bound together and commit the further gruesome murders of Derren's friends, Michael and Karen Kelly, and of Agnes Mchali, their domestic worker. Echo also kidnaps a child, whom she thinks is being abused by her parents, and shoots the mother. The murderers end up working as hospitality staff at an engagement party for Zanele Majola in a game reserve. When Zanele is found dead, Detectives Dingane Fakude and Naveed Khan enter the story and their investigation drives the narrative. They connect Echo and Derren to the previous murders, find the kidnapped child, and it appears that Zanele's murder is blamed on her fiancé. About to be imprisoned, Echo draws a gun on the police and is shot.

Echo's image bookends the film as the first and last character we see onscreen, and, as I show during the discussion of the beach sex scene, it is her interior experience that initiates the flashback to the attempted rape by the bar owner. These elements of the narrative frame *Impunity* as Echo's story, which intimates that her subjectivity will be prominent in the narrative. A Black woman representing the story of Echo, a white woman presents the opportunity, as in *Nommer 37*, for Mistry to bring hooks's "new kind of subject" into being (2003:104). hooks argues that the manner in which Julie Dash and the Sankofa collective centre Black women and their subjectivities in their narratives is not merely a response to the dominant representation of white men, but that this departure from convention encourages

and makes room for marginalised subjectivities (2003:104). As a woman, Echo's perspective on events in this crime film, would be the representation of one such marginalised subjectivity. This study uncovers, however, that Mistry forgoes Echo's perspective on events.

While my approach to the narrative positions *Impunity* as Echo's story, it is worth mentioning that the film's cinematographer, Eran Tahor, writes that there are three narrative arcs in the film (2016:44). Tahor lists these as that of Echo and Derren (2016:45), of Fakude and Khan (2016:46), and although he does not specify the third, he insinuates that it is that of the politician, Minister Majola (2016:47). Supporting my experience of the film as Echo's story, Trish Malone, who developed the story, explains in an email that *Impunity* is *loosely* inspired by the story of Charmaine Phillips, and she makes no mention of the detectives who investigated the murders. Charmaine Phillips and Pieter Grundlingh were a South African couple responsible for four murders in June 1983 and arrested in July 1983.

As a story that is "*loosely* inspired" by a real-life murderous couple, *Impunity* follows in the footsteps of other outlaw couple films like *Bonnie and Clyde* (Penn, 1967), and *Badlands* (Malick, 1974). These examples are based on real-life characters and tell stories of disaffected youth and, as Marsha Kinder writes, "deal with the way ordinary people confront frustration and impotence," (1974:3). *Impunity* was marketed as a thriller along the lines of Oliver Stones's *Natural Born Killers* (1994) (National Film and Video Foundation, 2015), a more recent outlaw couple film inspired by an actual couple. These films are all tonally different with different narrative outcomes. In *Bonnie and Clyde*, for example, the murderous couple dies, in *Badlands*, the young man, Kit, is arrested, while in *Natural Born Killers*, the couple disturbingly triumphs over the law, fleeing into what one can only imagine is a violent future with their children. *Impunity* is notable in this case as it ends with Echo's death.

As mentioned above, Mistry, a film scholar and filmmaker, had directed other films before *Impunity*. *We Remember Differently* (2005) and *The Bull on the Roof* (2010) are the two fiction films Mistry directed before *Impunity*. Both these films have a less conventional narrative structure, are more experimental, and explore themes of memory, identity, belonging, and being.

Before attending to the gaze, I consider the racialised dimensions of a Black filmmaker telling the story of a white protagonist, Echo, and Mistry's inclination to represent white

characters onscreen. This is followed by a brief introduction to the works of key scholars that I refer to in this study and a discussion of how their theories may combine with the racialised nature of the film. Following this, I present the close analyses of the four scenes in *Impunity*.

REPRESENTING WHITE WOMEN ONSCREEN

With regards to race and the fictional stories Mistry has chosen to tell on film to date (*We Remember Differently*, and *The Bull on the Roof*), she tends to represent white characters more than Black characters. *We Remember Differently*, for example is a short film about the relationship between a white mother and daughter and how they each remember their family's story differently. Mistry and Ellapen see the film and the eponymously titled book of essays about the film as an opportunity for the filmmaking team and the essay writers to use their imaginations in a way that is no longer constrained by apartheid ideas of race (2012:xv). This exercise allows for the exploration of possible new ways of being in South Africa and points to a longing for freedom from these constraints, which is hard to achieve in reality.

The women in *We Remember*, although white, remember events from their family's history through photographs and 8mm film archive of an Indian family. For Mistry and Ellapen this illustrates the complexity of identity construction, along with how we imagine and identify race in South Africa (2012:xviii), and further shows that race is not only about skin colour, but also about cultural practices that we access and perform (2012:xvi). For Mistry, this incongruity between the race of the characters and the race in their memories, reveals the presence of whiteness in the imaginations of people of Indian descent (2012:58). This presence of whiteness in the minds of Indian people along with Mistry's claim of their aspirations to a white aesthetic and white measures of success (2012:51), allows for a further interpretation of the racial representation in the film as that of the story of an Indian mother and daughter, who, because of the dominant nature of whiteness in South Africa, imagine themselves as white and move through the world with this idea of themselves as white women. In *We Remember*, we may understand that that which is visible to the viewer, is how these two women perceive themselves as a result of their aspirations to measure up to markers of success that are defined by whiteness. This brief exploration of *We Remember Differently*, illustrates an interest in raced identities, and a particular interest in the influence of whiteness on how people of Indian descent shape and understand identities. It also alludes to a curiosity around whiteness on the part of the filmmaker, which may explain her tendency to represent white protagonists in her fiction films.

Mistry's tendency to represent white women onscreen recalls Frantz Fanon's explorations into the separation of the psyche from and by society in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986/1952). Homi Bhabha in his 1986 foreword to *Black Skin*, says that Fanon "... speaks [] from deep within the struggle of psychic representation and social reality," (1986/1952:ix). The representation of whiteness by a Black woman filmmaker, is not only Mistry's struggle, but a manifestation of an entire society's wrestling to come to terms with its ideas, imaginings, and yearnings versus what is allowed in reality. Like Fanon, Mistry grapples with ideas of belonging in South Africa as she represents the women in *We Remember* negotiating their identity at a psychological level.

Mistry's *The Bull on the Roof* is a very different film, with a variety of stories and scenes, and without a central protagonist. The film takes the viewer from Africa to Europe to the United States through snapshots of scenes from daily life like having sex, drinking coffee, walking through the city, and commuting on public transport. Both race and gender representation in this film are worth remarking on. There are few Black people in the film, a couple having sex in South Africa, a Black man in New York's subway, Mistry makes an appearance in New York, too, a woman drinking coffee in Europe, a Black artist on the beach, and a Black woman having sex with a white man. Out of the thirty-two unique characters I counted, these seven were the only Black people. Even if the majority of the locations are in Europe, the characters in the South African scenes, where one may expect more Black characters, are also predominantly white. Considering these three fiction films might suggest that Mistry is invested in white subjectivities. But perhaps only in *We Remember* does this investment question ideas of whiteness and identity. While *The Bull on the Roof* has an experimental narrative structure, the depictions of whiteness, as in *Impunity*, are familiar and do not push the viewer to reflect on whiteness. While Mistry displays an interest in race and identity formation through *We Remember*, the film and the book, her centring of whiteness in her films is largely done in a manner that endorses traditional representations of hegemonic whiteness, rather than questioning these.

The Bull on the Roof includes a few scenes with nudity that represent the women in a manner that reveals their naked breasts and, in two instances, also exposes their pubic areas. In contrast, only one scene represents a man completely exposed and showing his penis. The two women in *We Remember Differently*, are also represented in the nude in the scene where the daughter bathes the mother, and a subsequent scene of the daughter regarding her body in

the mirror. The exhibition of women's bodies and not men's is, as I show below, repeated in *Impunity*. Consistent with the Hollywood convention, and regardless of whether the spectator is a woman or a man, Mistry presents the woman's nakedness as the spectacle "to-be-looked-at" (Mulvey, 1989a/1975:19-20), and required to bear the gaze (Mulvey, 1989a/1975:20). The women whom Mistry represents for the spectator "to look at" are mostly white, demonstrating that the image of the white woman, rather than that of the Black woman, continues to be the site that feeds the scopophilia of the spectator.

This brief exploration of the raced and gendered nature of Mistry's fiction films reveals a consistent investment in depicting the subjectivities of white women, and the representation of white women's bodies in a manner that conforms to Mulvey's assertion that women's bodies are the spectacle to-be-looked-at in traditional Hollywood cinema (1989a/1975:19-20), and hooks' clarification that it is the bodies of *white* women that are the object of the gaze (hooks, 1992a:123).

LOOKING AT *IMPUNITY* WITH MULVEY AND OTHERS

This study analyses the framing and camera position of four scenes in *Impunity* to determine whether Mistry uses a patriarchal cinematic language to represent Echo. Mulvey argues in 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' that Classical Hollywood cinema represented women primarily as passive and for the pleasure of the male gaze with her key characteristic being her '*to-be-looked-at-ness*' (1989a/1975:19). Men, in contrast, are the ones who, not only drive the action in these films, but also direct the viewer's gaze to look at the woman onscreen (1989a/1975:20).

Williams, in her examination of pornography, horror, and melodrama, identifies women's bodies as the site of intense affect in each genre (2012:162), even when the films are traditionally targeted at male audiences, as in pornography, or at teenage audiences, as in horror (2012:162). I find this notion of the woman's body as the site of extreme affect to be relevant in the beach sex scene and with the murder of Karen Kelly, the femme fatale.

Williams and Doane both identify the woman who *does* look as transgressive and threatening to the man's position of power within the Classical Hollywood narrative (Williams, 1984:564-570; Doane, 1991a:2). Both theorists maintain that the woman who threatens the man's position will be punished (Williams, 1984:570; Doane, 1991a:2). I understand the

murder of the femme fatale, Karen, as the punishment of the woman who assumes power through her short-lived direct gaze. For Doane, the woman's transgression may be atoned for through the performance of excessive femininity, or the masquerade (1991b/1982:25).

Doane's theory of the masquerade is especially applicable to the blue wig scene in *Impunity*.

My analysis of the rape scene in *Impunity* pays attention to the way Mistry uses the cinematic apparatus to represent the action. Spallacci's writing on representations of rape and trauma in film and television augment my thinking in the close comparative study with the rape scene from *The Accused*.

The works that I draw on all consider the gendered nature of the gaze in films that are directed by white men. Only Mistry's own reflections on her work considers race and representation, although it does not consider the gaze. Through its focus on the gaze represented by a Black woman filmmaker, this study considers how the gaze is impacted by race.

Celestino Deleyto's research into the expression of subjectivity in film (1991) offers an entry point for my consideration of camera placement and framing in *Impunity*. I understand Deleyto's "focaliser" as the equivalent of *the agent who directs the audience's attention*, which is pivotal to this study. Deleyto's scrutiny of how cinematic elements work to focus the spectator's attention, helps me to identify the presence of a perspective that is outside of the action in the four scenes I consider.

Interestingly, in an interview with Mieke Bernink for Amsterdam University of the Arts, Mistry points out that film studies tend to favour the study of content and product over the study of the use of cinematic language (2017:8). Where scholars do look critically at cinematic form, Mistry contends that this is usually done with experimental and Avant Garde films (2017:17). My research into *Impunity*, as a study of how Mistry uses the language of film to represent the woman protagonist, is an addition towards those film studies that pay critical attention to the use of cinematic language.

THE MALE GAZE AT THE FEMALE BODY

In her analysis, Mulvey applies her ideas of the male gaze to Josef von Sternberg's and Alfred Hitchcock's films. She illustrates how Von Sternberg's gaze fetishises the onscreen

woman through shots that show pieces of her perfect body in close-up and to-be-looked-at by the viewer (1989a/1975:22), rather than her body in action. The camera that substitutes for the heterosexual male gaze, fragments the woman's body as it shows us the woman's breasts, her eyes, her lips, her bum, and any other part that it needs to sexualise in order to represent its/man's desire. This disjointed representation of the woman's body has become a convention of patriarchal cinema.

In classical Hollywood films the patriarchal structure also usually finds expression through the man as the active character, who does the looking, while the woman is passive, on display, and being looked at by the man (Mulvey, 1989a/1975:23-24). This convention is, for example, conspicuous in the James Bond franchise where Bond, usually a man, is actively in pursuit of an evil antagonist, chasing after him on an expensive yacht, skiing giddily down snowy slopes, or careening around a hairpin bend atop a sheer cliff. Bond's thrilling activity is usually arrested somewhere along the narrative by the appearance of a voluptuous, scantily clad woman, who may also be smart. Bond stops to gaze at her form and ultimately to have sex with her. These elements of Bond movies are evident in *For Your Eyes Only* (Glen, 1981). Hollywood representation may have progressed somewhat in the direction of positioning women as the active protagonists of stories and affording them more agency onscreen since Mulvey's work was first published forty-five years ago. Notwithstanding these gains for women-centred stories, men continue to be the norm as heroes and protagonists, and women continue to be represented for the erotic viewing pleasure of men. Martin Botha, Lindiwe Dovey, and Neil Parsons all describe how Hollywood was fundamental to the development of South African cinema (Botha, 2007:23; Dovey, 2007:144-145; Parsons, 2013). Hollywood's influence on South African filmmaking is enduring, and in this essay, I examine whether the woman protagonist in *Impunity* is represented for the heterosexual male gaze as per the Hollywood convention. It is therefore fitting to conduct this study within Mulvey's heteronormative framework because *Impunity* represents heterosexuality and white heterosexual relationships.

SEX ON THE BEACH

The first heterosexual sex scene in *Impunity* takes place seven minutes into the film and is a consensual sex act between Echo and Derren. I analyse the first sex scene to show how Mistry positions the camera and uses it to imply a heterosexual male gaze. This sex scene along with two scenes of seduction and the rape scene, offer the chance to study the gaze in

scenes where gender and sexuality are centred. Were Mulvey's male gaze to be employed in the way that the camera frames the scenes, it would be most evident through the manner in which the male and female bodies are represented.

The sex scene happens on the beach and is intercut with Echo's rape by the bar owner. Together these scenes run from 07:14 to 11:17, for just over four minutes and it is the first time Echo (Alex McGregor) and Derren (Bjorn Steinbach) have sexual relations. The rape scene interrupts the sex scene on the beach from 09:02 and is represented as Echo's internalised recollection of the assault and subsequent murder of the bar owner. Echo's experience of the sex becomes interwoven with her memory of the violent rape, and Mistry implies that sex and violence merge for Echo in this way. The analysis in this section explores the representation of the consensual sex scene specifically, with the rape being addressed separately in this chapter.

I focus on the beach sex scene because it is a consensual sex act that is represented as an external event that both Echo and Derren are aware of. As the protagonists, their perspectives on events would, as per the Hollywood convention, frame the narrative. As the sex act is consensual, it establishes the characters as equal in the act, which means that it may be represented from either or both perspectives. Guided by Celestino Deleyto's approach to determining the onscreen gaze, I show that Mistry affords both the woman and the man the chance to control the gaze, but that she also introduces a third voyeuristic gaze. The location of the beach is tied to ideas of holidays, freedom, and good times. A scene at the beach raises the expectation that the characters will be relaxed and uninhibited as they find themselves in a calming natural environment. By association, Echo and Derren can be relaxed and uninhibited in this environment. And they are! They have sex on the beach, without showing any concern that they may be observed by other people. The representation of the beach as deserted, except for the protagonists, and its suggestion of an uninhibited sexual experience, further suggests the opportunity for the camera to be uninhibited in its representation of the scene.

In studying each shot from the beach scene, the objective is to determine character representation in terms of duration on screen, perspective of the gaze, and how the characters are embodied for an interpretation of the gendered nature of the gaze. Looking at figures twenty-four to twenty-seven, the camera placement for these shots delivers a variety of

angles on the action. Figure twenty-four shows a slight high angle, figure twenty-five depicts a profile shot of the action, figure twenty-six another slight high angle, and figure twenty-seven a low angle on Echo. Celestino Deleyto describes the eyeline match as a basic technique to indicate a subjectivity that is part of the action (1991:171). The eyeline match requires the frame to show the character looking offscreen, followed by the shot that shows what they are looking at (Deleyto, 1991:171). Deleyto also identifies an “external focaliser” (1991) that can stand in for a character’s vantage point when it offers the spectator a better perspective of the action than the character’s own point of view (1991:171). Figures twenty-four to twenty-seven are in the order they appear in the scene and they illustrate Deleyto’s “external focaliser” representing a clearer perspective on the action. In figure twenty-four we see Echo looking, and in figure twenty-five, we have an external perspective of what she is looking at. In figure twenty-six the perspective external to the action shows us Derren looking, and then in figure twenty-seven we see what he is looking at. Celestino posits that even if the perspective on the action is external to the action, its approximation of a character’s vantage point allows it to be read as representing what the character sees (1991:171). Deleyto’s interpretation of camera placement shows that Mistry does afford the characters equal subjectivity in this sequence of the sex scene and that the gaze is at times a female gaze, and at other times, a male gaze.

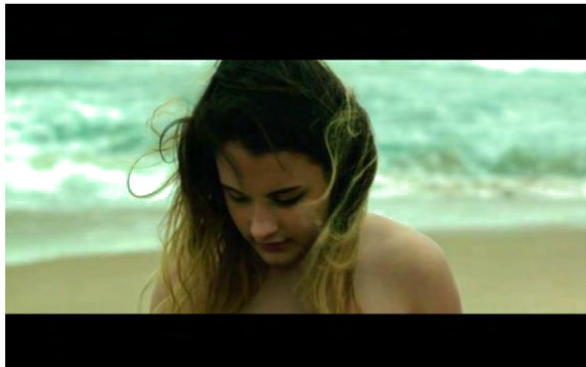


Figure 24. Echo’s face from an observer’s perspective.

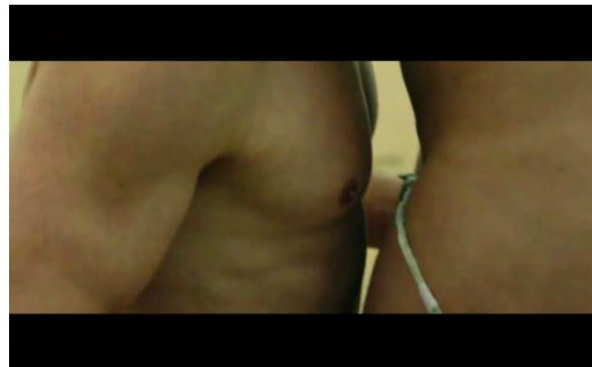


Figure 25. Derren removes Echo’s underpants.



Figure 26. Derren looks up at Echo.

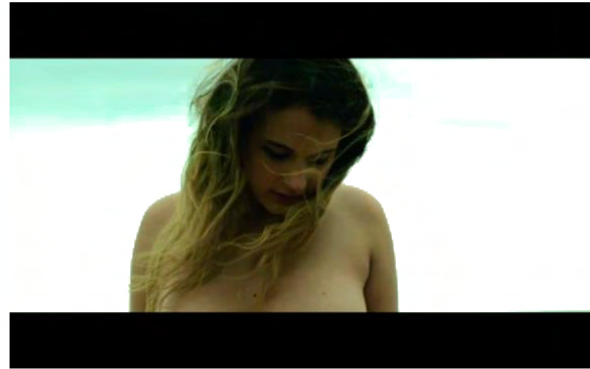


Figure 27. Echo watches Derren.

The shot that fits between figures twenty-five and twenty-six, is that of figure twenty-eight, which I excerpted from the sequence because of the different perspective it represents on the action. With this shot Mistry does not attempt to approximate either character's gaze on the action. This perspective is obviously external to the action and draws attention to itself as the only wide shot on the sex in the middle of the action. As the quote by B. Ruby Rich states at the beginning of this chapter, "... when the act [of looking] is foregrounded, something's always up" (1993:56). What is it that may be up here, then? This wide shot reminds the viewer of their place as observer and suggests an instance of voyeurism. In this sequence then, Mistry's represents multiple perspectives as she affords both the woman and the man a chance to direct the gaze. When she removes the viewer from the intimacy of the scene, she places them in the position of voyeur, suggesting that our intimate moments are being watched.



Figure 28. Alex McGregor, completely naked, while Bjorn Steinbach wears jeans from a perspective outside of the action.

After this sequence of Derren removing Echo's underwear, Mistry does represent Echo looking more than Derren. Echo's glance on these occasions, takes the spectator back-and-forth between the beach sex and the memory of the rape at the bar. Along with connecting the

sex with violence as mentioned earlier, this intercutting also suggests Echo's distance from the beach sex as her memory returns her to the rape.

Echo's face is onscreen for just over twice as long (sixty-nine seconds) as Derren's (thirty-one seconds), indicating either that it is the primary object of the gaze or that her subjectivity is important. In addition to showing us Echo's face, the framing draws the viewer's eye to parts of Echo's body that have been traditionally sexualised in the representation of women onscreen. The parts of Derren's body the camera shows us over thirteen seconds of the four-minute scene are his hands as they caress Echo's back, his shoulder as it supports Echo's thigh, his head as he performs cunnilingus, and his torso as he and Echo approach each other or stand against each other. In contrast, the parts of Echo's body that we are guided to look at are her breasts, her buttocks, thigh, and her lower back for a total of fifty-seven seconds. Her breasts and buttocks are traditionally eroticised parts of the woman's body, and in the scene, her lower back is too, as Derren caresses it, his hands *en route* to remove her underwear. Her thigh becomes heavily sexualised as Derren lifts it over his shoulder to part her legs for cunnilingus. The focus on Echo's face and the sexualisation of parts of her body suggest that even if her subjectivity is important, that she is also the primary object of the gaze.

Mulvey pinpoints and assigns the active and passive roles to men and women onscreen, explaining that this happens because men are averse to looking at themselves on display and prefer to look at themselves doing something (1989a/1975:20). The framing and camera position of this scene conform to this patriarchal convention through the representation of Derren as the active man, creating pleasure for himself and Echo in the scene. In contrast, Echo is positioned as passive and receiving pleasure. Furthermore, as described above, Echo's body is heavily sexualised, while Derren's is not. Echo's body is thus represented for erotic viewing pleasure and aligns with the fetishized representations that Mulvey identifies in her analysis of Von Sternberg's films (1989a/1975:22). With regards to *how* the camera wants us to gaze at the scene, it would therefore be fair to say that the framing of Echo's naked body places her on display for the traditional heterosexual male gaze "imposed" (Mulvey, 1989a/1975:29) on the spectators viewing the scene. Even though *Impunity* is the woman's story, the representation of the action favours the heterosexual male gaze.

A further observation about her embodiment, is that in keeping with the patriarchal cinematic tradition, Echo is completely naked during the scene, while Derren is only topless (figure

twenty-eight). This raises questions about the ethics of the production context that required McGregor to be naked, but not Steinbach. The naked woman within a heterosexual sex scene within a heteronormative cinema culture suggests that her nudity, with its “strong visual and erotic impact” (Mulvey, 1989a/1975:18), is another element of the scene represented for the enjoyment of the heterosexual male gaze.

Now that I have established that the gaze in this scene is predominantly a masculine one, I determine the extent to which Mulvey’s active-passive division of labour is evident in the scene. We see what Derren does as he removes Echo’s underpants and gives pleasure. These actions position Derren as active, even though he is not always in control of the gaze, and Echo, in contrast, as she receives pleasure, may be viewed as passively receiving pleasure. In keeping with the ‘heterosexual division of labour’ identified by Mulvey as a characteristic of patriarchal classical Hollywood (1989a/1975:20), the man is active, and the woman is passive. This interpretation also conforms to the patriarchal practice of representing the woman’s body as the site of pleasure, in what Williams terms the “female body genres,” (2012:167) even when the action is represented for the benefit of the heterosexual male gaze (2012:162).

Patricia McFadden however, offers an alternative interpretation of Echo’s receiving of pleasure. For McFadden, a woman who enjoys her body and its pleasures, performs the revolutionary act of wresting control of her body from the patriarchy (2003:54). According to McFadden, patriarchal society repeatedly communicates that women’s bodies are dirty, and are not sites of enjoyment because they exist for the purpose of reproduction within heterosexual unions (2003:52-54). Reading Echo’s participation in the sex as an active one of reclamation of agency, complicates the message of the scene because the woman being active, is represented through a perspective that is aligned with a masculine gaze. Here Mistry suggests that regardless of the agency women claim for themselves, their actions continue to be viewed from a masculine point of view.

As mentioned earlier, traditional cinema, in order to create the cinematic illusion of reality, attempts to hide both the camera’s and the spectator’s presence (Mulvey 1989a/1975:25). Interestingly, this is not the case in *Impunity* as this external camera perspective alerts the viewer to their voyeurism. Mistry draws the viewer’s attention to the observer camera, which calls to mind the security camera footage that appears occasionally in the film. The

suggestion here, then, is that even in our most intimate moments, we are being observed, and that our actions are under surveillance.

Continuing through the beach sex scene, I show with figures twenty-nine and thirty how the camera placement proceeds in its representation of the action from a perspective aligned with the heterosexual male gaze. Not only does figure twenty-nine show Derren's enjoyment, it shows his enjoyment of Echo's body, and that her body provides enjoyment for him. What we see here, then, is the man "actively" deriving pleasure from the woman's body. While we see Derren deriving pleasure from Echo's body, it is notable that one of the ways he derives pleasure is through cunnilingus. Traditionally, sex scenes suggest or show penetrative sex and/or fellatio, and it is unusual to have a sex scene that represents an act that foregrounds the woman's pleasure. Notwithstanding the significance of this representation of cunnilingus, the close-up shots that sexualise Echo and not Derren within the heterosexual sex scene, suggest that the viewing experience is targeted at a heterosexual male gaze. In contrast, Echo does not enjoy Derren's body, and neither is her enjoyment of cunnilingus evident. As discussed above, Echo's receiving of pleasure, can be viewed as active as she dares to enjoy sex, but the complication with this scene, is that her enjoyment, unlike Derren's, is not represented in a manner that is immediately obvious at this point. What is clear, is that Echo's body, the woman's body, is where Derren finds his pleasure. This, Williams has illustrated, is another tradition of patriarchal cinema, with women's bodies as the site of pleasure (in pornography), fear (in horror), and pain (in melodrama), "even when the pleasure of viewing has traditionally been constructed for masculine spectators" (Williams 2012:162).

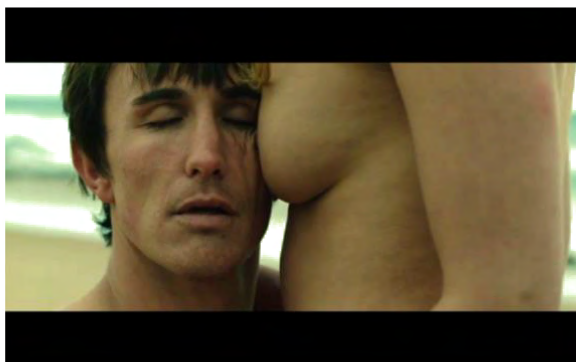


Figure 29. Derren's face shows enjoyment and engagement.

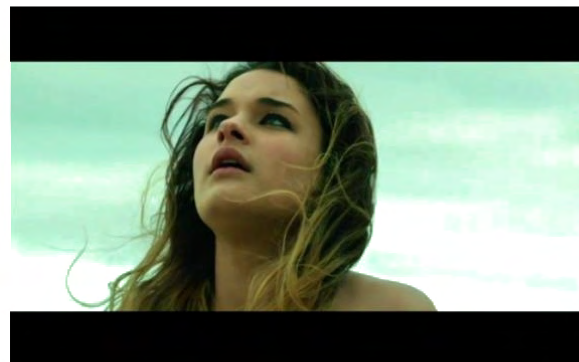


Figure 30. Echo's begins to show enjoyment.

At ten minutes and twenty-six seconds, Echo is finally visibly affected by the sex as she throws back her head and closes her eyes in a recognisable display of pleasure (figure thirty).

Now we have seen both Derren and Echo experience pleasure in this scene, but Echo's pleasure is represented as specifically tied to her orgasming, while Derren's pleasure is shown as connected to his enjoyment of Echo's body. Echo's eventual visible pleasure at the moment of orgasm becomes the spectacle in the scene. Mulvey, noting the woman's "to-be-looked-at-ness", and Williams, locating the woman's body as the site of male viewing pleasure, both position the viewer or the one watching, as masculine and the one on display, who is also the spectacle, as feminine. Echo's own looking in this scene tends to take viewers back to the rape as after each shot of her eyes, Mistry cuts to the rape scene. This means that for a large part of the scene Echo is clearly not directing the gaze to the action on the beach. Because this is a heterosexual sex scene, it is readily understood within a heterosexual viewing framework and a heterosexual male gaze that sexualises Echo and locates her body as the site of enjoyment of the male gaze. Within this heterosexual viewing framework, and despite the introduction of the woman's active enjoyment of the sex, and an external perspective on the action, Mistry reproduces the visual power relations of patriarchal cinema.

Applying Deleyto's approach to the cinematic grammar of this sequence in the beach sex scene, reveals that the gaze is both feminine and masculine. While this representation appears balanced, the placement of the camera in the wide shot suggests otherwise as it draws attention to the viewer as voyeur of the scene. The fact that Echo is represented in close-ups that eroticise parts of her body, that the man is represented as the one creating pleasure, and that the woman's body is the site of pleasure all indicate that this scene is primarily for the viewing pleasure of this voyeuristic heterosexual male gaze. Although this is a consensual sex scene, where pleasure could be equally enjoyed by both the woman and the man, the representation of the scene for a male gaze does not reflect this balance.

FLASHBACK TO THE RAPE

The rape scene in *Impunity* intrudes on the beach sex scene, suggesting that Echo's experience of the sex is shaped by her memory of the attempted rape. Because the rape of women by men is about the male need to control and subjugate women, this scene presents the opportunity to uncover the gendered perspective on the rape. As *Impunity* is Echo's story and the attempted rape launches her narrative arc, one may expect that the traumatic event is filmed from her perspective. This analysis draws on ideas raised in Amanda Spallacci's discussion of the rapes in *Monster* (Jenkins, 2003) and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*

(Fincher, 2011). I also compare the framing of shots in the *Impunity* rape scene with the framing of shots in the rape scene in *The Accused* (Kaplan, 1988).

The action of the rape begins with the bar owner saying to Echo, “I’ve been watching you,” as he backs her into a table. As in *Nommer 37*, these words point to the presence of a male gaze of surveillance at the woman lead. B. Ruby Rich, in her discussion of Sarah Tobias’s (Jodie Foster) dancing in *The Accused*, recognises the “proprietary” (1993/1992:56) feelings of the men in the bar watching Sarah’s dance. Rich extends these feelings of possession over Sarah’s body to the men in the cinema because their spectator gaze has similarly “captured” her body (1993/1992:56). The attempted rape that follows the bar owner’s utterance in *Impunity* is, as in *The Accused*, a manifestation of these feelings of ownership that his gaze allows him to feel over Echo’s body.

Spallacci, in her study of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and *Monster*, distinguishes between close-ups of the victim and close-ups of the attacker and that these different representations elicit different viewing responses (2019:3). For Spallacci, rape scenes that show the victim’s face in close-up and in distress encourage empathy for the victim (2019:3). In contrast, scenes that focus on close-ups of the victim’s body parts and show the attacker’s face highlight the physical violence of the event and lead to feelings of revulsion for the attacker (Spallacci, 2019:3). The rape scene in *Impunity* is represented entirely through handheld close-up shots of both the victim, Echo, and her attacker, the bar owner. Shots of the characters’ faces at times begin in shadow but end well-lit because of the frenzied movement within the frame as in figures thirty-one and thirty-two, which are parts of one shot. While Mistry does represent close-ups of body parts in the scene (figures thirty-three and thirty-four), these are fewer than the close-ups of the faces. In *Impunity* Mistry represents both the victim’s and the attacker’s (figure thirty-five) faces in close-up, which encourages empathy for the victim’s anguish and disgust for the attacker’s violence.



Figure 31. Echo's face in close-up and in shadow.



Figure 32. Echo's face in close-up and well-lit.

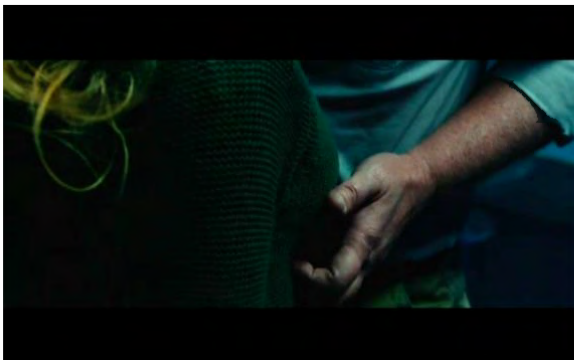


Figure 33. Mistry frames body parts in the rape scene.



Figure 34. Mistry frames the body in the rape scene.

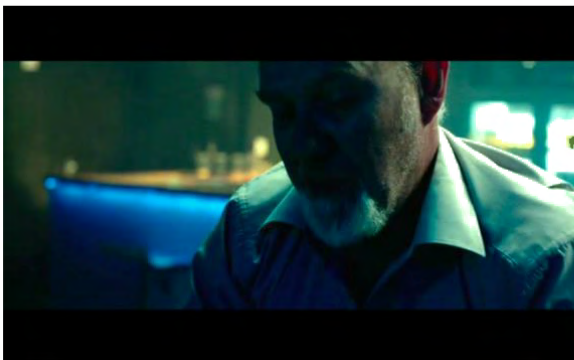


Figure 35. Framing and camera position for the bar owner's face.



Figure 36. Framing and camera position of Echo's face.

The images referred to so far in figures thirty-one to thirty-six represent the action in profile. These frames do not represent the bar owner's perspective because in figures thirty-two and thirty-six, he is standing over Echo and would be seeing the top of her head. The shots of the bar owner's hands, and Echo's side are from neither character's perspective. Unlike in the beach sex scene, where the external perspective is used to approximate the character's perspective, this is not the case here. I infer this because what the viewer sees, is not what the characters are looking at, or, in other words, glance-object editing is not used to show the

action. When the camera frames the bar owner, as in figure thirty-five, it is again positioned slightly to the side of the action, showing the audience more of the left side of his face than the right side. This is not Echo's point of view because she is lying forward over the table as in figures thirty-two and thirty-six, able to see only other tables and the floor from her position. These frames all indicate that the camera is positioned outside of the action.

A comparison with the harrowing rape in *The Accused* shows clearly that Mistry avoids representing the rape from Echo's perspective. In *The Accused*, director Jonathan Kaplan affords viewers the perspective of more than one character present at the event, including Sarah Tobias's, the victim's. Using the standard point of view shot and glance-object editing, Kaplan represents Sarah looking in figure thirty-seven, and then we see what she sees in figure thirty-eight.



Figure 37. Sarah's eyes show that she is looking.

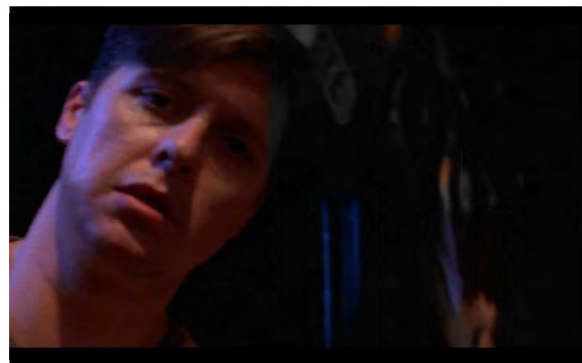


Figure 38. What Sarah was looking at in figure 37.

Unlike in *The Accused*, Mistry withholds Echo's perspective on events. The frenzied movement in the *Impunity* scene makes it difficult to discern whose perspective, if anyone's, Mistry is foregrounding. The close study above shows, however, that the camera is predominantly positioned outside of the action. The position of the camera as outside the action, situates the audience as observer to the action. With her analysis of the rapes in *Monster* and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, Spallacci notes that with the camera positioned as observer to the rapes, the viewer bears witness to the violence inflicted on the women (2019:6). In the same way, Mistry uses the camera placement to mediate the viewer's position as witness to the attempted rape in *Impunity*. If the audience is witness to the attempted rape, and if watching rape in film can be "a form of sexual assault" as Sarah Projansky proffers about some filmic representations of rape, (2001:116), then through their watching, Mistry conveys that viewers are complicit in violence meted out to women.

The position of the camera does not correspond with Echo's point of view, instead, it is one that is outside the action in this scene and builds on the meaning of the camera position in the beach sex scene. The beach sex shots are more languid in their representation with more of the landscape visible around the protagonists, which heightens the feeling of voyeurism when it is highlighted. The closer, more claustrophobic framing of the rape scene, along with the quick movements inside the frame, confuse the perspective on the rape, but this analysis unveils that the two scenes gesture towards the viewer as voyeur. In this scene Mistry positions the gaze outside of the action more clearly than in the beach sex scene, and in so doing implicates the viewer through their passive visual assault on the woman. Thus, Mistry comments on spectator enjoyment of sexual violence in genre films.

This comparison shows that Jonathan Kaplan, the director, affords Sarah Tobias, the female victim, some control of the gaze, while Mistry refrains from empowering her victim in the same way.

INTRODUCING THE FEMME FATALE

Below I consider the scene with Derren's friends, Michael and Karen Kelly, as a further example of Mistry's tendency not to foreground the gaze of either protagonist along with the suggestion of an external observing perspective on events. The scene with Michael and Karen, takes place after the beach sex scene (21:56), and is notable because it includes a few instances of the direct gaze of characters, although not always using the technique of glance-object editing. Karen is represented as the femme fatale, who dares to look, and as the model for Echo's blue wig persona in the later scene. The femme fatale as a convention of noir, may offer further insight into the gendered representation in *Impunity*.

The direct gazes of the characters in this scene are shown in figures thirty-nine, forty-one, and forty-two. The first instance where Mistry shows us a character looking and what they are looking at is in figure thirty-nine as Karen's seduction of Derren begins. Williams recognises that "to see is to desire" and is thus an inappropriate feeling for patriarchal cinema's "good girl" (1984:561). Karen's repeated direct gaze indicates that she is not a "good girl". What she sees is Derren in figure forty who, at this point is uncertain about surrendering to Karen's advances, and avoids looking at her. Eventually, Mistry shows us his eyes as he returns Karen's direct gaze with his own direct gaze in figure forty-one. Echo observes this seduction as in figure forty-two as Mistry focuses on Echo's eyes. This

seduction sequence focuses on the gaze and at times Mistry shows the viewer what a character is gazing at, while at other times she does not, instead choosing to cut to a different character watching. For example, while in one round of looks between two people, Mistry shows Karen looking (figure thirty-nine) and what she is looking at, namely Derren (figure forty), in another, she cuts from Karen looking, not to what she is looking at, but to Echo watching the dance of the gaze between Karen and Derren (figure forty-two), showing Echo's reaction to the seduction.

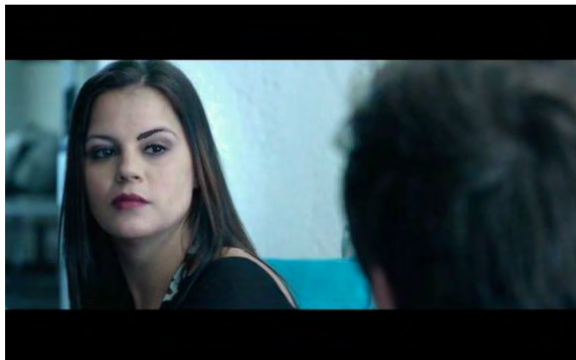


Figure 39. Karen's direct gaze at Derren.

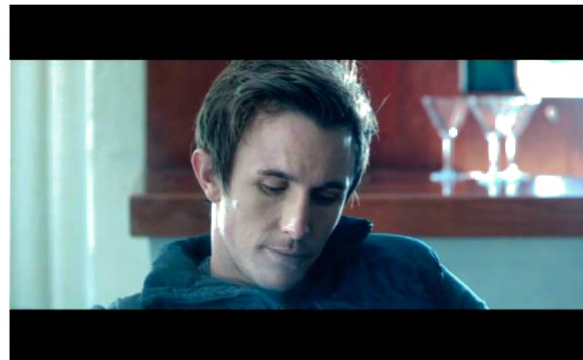


Figure 40. Derren avoids Karen's direct gaze.

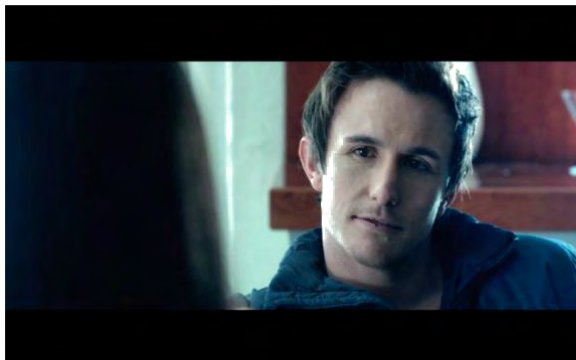


Figure 41. Derren eventually returns Karen's direct gaze.



Figure 42. Echo's direct gaze as she watches Karen and Derren gazing at each other.

In a later portion of the scene, Mistry shows us Michael's gaze (figure forty-five) followed by the external camera perspective of what he is looking at in figure forty-six. Although Michael and Karen are secondary characters in the narrative, Mistry chooses to briefly foreground their gazes and their subjectivity with direct frontal framing of their eyes. She does not match this representation with the gazes of the protagonists in the blue wig scene below, neither with the beach sex, nor with the rape scene. Mistry assigns more weight to the perspective of secondary characters and to the perspective that is outside the action than to the protagonists' in these scenes. The action of the protagonists is predominantly represented from an external perspective, which is in keeping with the idea of surveillance and the usage of closed-circuit

television archive in the narrative. The feeling of surveillance arises from Mistry's inclination to represent the action in close-up at length and then to widen the perspective as in figures forty-four and forty-seven. The sudden shift in perspective draws attention to the technique, pulling the viewer out of the narrative and alerting them to their position as voyeur. This self-conscious external perspective is present in all three scenes analysed so far, insinuating the spectator's awareness of what happens in intimate and private moments, and implying their participation in private moments of violence.

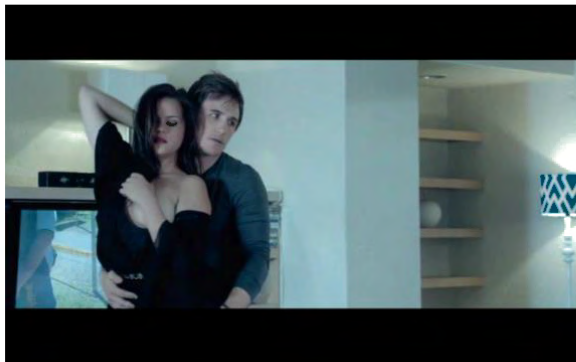


Figure 43. Derren dances with Karen, the original temptress.

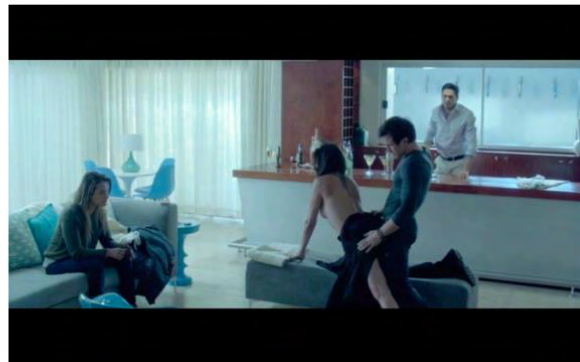


Figure 44. Wide shot of Derren and Karen being watched by their partners.



Figure 45. Michael watches Karen dancing with Derren.

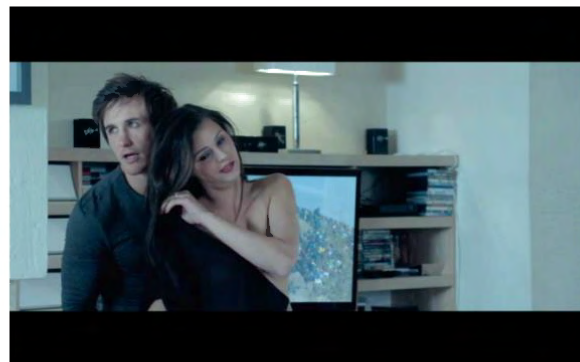


Figure 46. Derren and Karen.

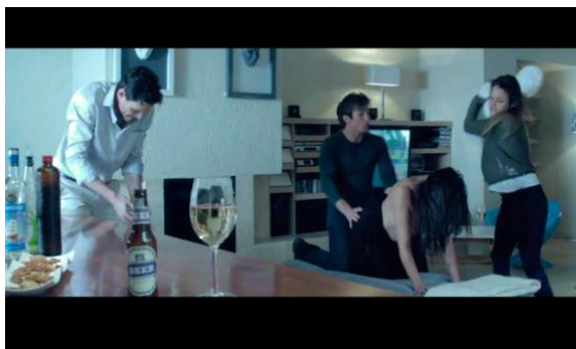


Figure 47. Echo embodies jealousy and bludgeons Karen to death.

In this scene, the representation of Karen, in particular her overt sexuality and her bold use of her gaze, is consistent with traditional representations of the femme fatale. Williams and Doane both demonstrate that the femme fatale will be punished, if not killed, by the end of the film for daring to transgress the traditional passive feminine role, and for employing the power of her gaze that threatens to usurp the masculine role (Williams, 1984:570; Doane 1991a:2). Mulvey's approach to Karen's role would be that Karen's "appearance [is] coded for strong visual and erotic impact" (1989a/1975:19), commanding the male gaze and enhancing her value in the narrative (1989a/1975:21). To compensate for her dominance in the scene, and to return the world to its natural order with the man as the powerful one in the diegesis, Karen needs to be punished or saved (Mulvey, 1989a/1975:21). Confirming the assertions of Williams, Doane, and Mulvey, Karen is bludgeoned to death by Echo six minutes into the scene. With the bludgeoning Echo enacts what Barbara Hales describes as society's fear of the liberated woman (2007:228) and quells this fear, by eliminating its source. Figure forty-seven also shows Echo's body as the site of excessive emotion (Williams, 2012:162), – jealousy – , as she bludgeons Karen. Hales also discusses how the femme fatale is responsible for the crimes that others commit (2007:229), which we see with Karen's behaviour being the catalyst for Echo's homicidal violence.

As in the beach sex scene, it is the woman once again, who is required to reveal her breasts for the viewer in figure forty-four. Women's breasts are not typically exposed in everyday life. The men, in contrast, remain fully clothed and are not required to reveal parts of their bodies, like the penis, for example, which are hidden in daily life. Within this heterosexual scene, the breasts of the femme fatale, Karen, are represented for the erotic viewing pleasure of the heterosexual male gaze. Bearing in mind that the heterosexual male gaze in these scenes is positioned as an observer external to the narrative, the representation of the women's bodies in these scenes correspond to what Doane identifies as the voyeuristic pleasure of being able to see what society's mores traditionally prevent one from seeing (1991b:20). The idea of voyeuristic pleasure as part of the experience of the scenes, yet again implies surveillance. The consistent gendering of this surveillance as heterosexual and male points to the surveilling gaze of society that Mistry makes complicit in the violence, as heterosexual and masculine.

The way the camera draws attention to itself in these three scenes, not only alerts the spectator to their awareness of intimate violence, but also to the presence of the production

team. Mistry does not hide the presence of the camera, a trait Mulvey noted of Classical Hollywood cinema (Mulvey, 1989a/1975:25), and in doing so, she also implicates herself in this violence.

ECHO'S REASSURING PERFORMANCE OF FEMININITY

Next, I pay close attention to the camera position and framing in the scene where Echo dons the blue wig. To see what it may reveal about the *Impunity* scene, I compare the blue wig scene with the one in Mike Nichols's *Closer* (2004), where Alice/Jane (Natalie Portman) wears the pink wig. In both scenes the women are dressed differently to how they have been up to this point in the narrative, and their costumes suggest a masquerade. I use the word "masquerade" firstly in its everyday sense, as both women are pretending to be something they are not for the enjoyment of the male gaze. My use of "masquerade" in the second sense of the word, is after the meaning theorised by Mary Anne Doane as a performance of femininity (1991b/1982:25).

Story wise, the blue wig scene takes place shortly after Derren's friends, Karen and Michael Kelly are murdered. In the film narrative it occurs slightly over halfway into the film (46:35) as a flashback to the house of the murdered couple. At this stage the two detectives are questioning Echo and Derren separately about the murders of Michael and Karen, and their domestic worker, Agnes Mchali. The flashback begins with Echo wearing a blue wig and appraising herself in the bedroom mirrors in figures forty-eight to fifty.

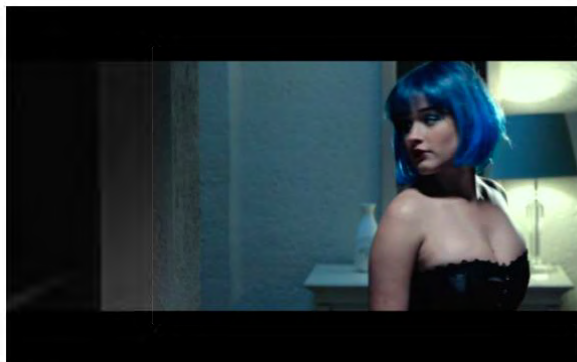


Figure 48. Echo looks over her shoulder at herself in the mirror.

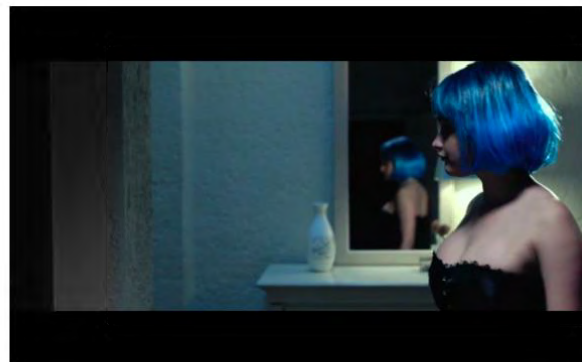


Figure 49. Echo in profile, looking at herself in a mirror.

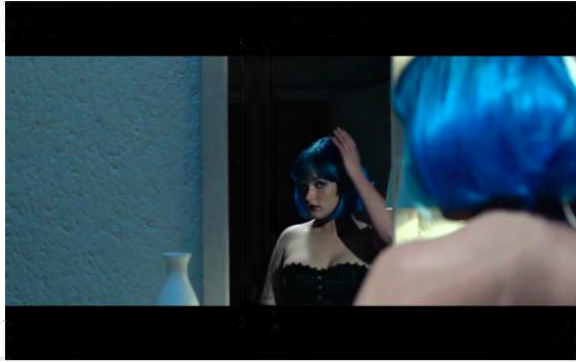


Figure 50. Echo and her reflection as seen from an observer position.

I am interested in the representation of Echo wearing the blue wig for what it may contribute to a more comprehensive reading of her representation and the gaze that Mulvey has argued, is “imposed” on the viewer in Classical Hollywood cinema (1989b/1981:29). To understand the representation in this scene, I compare it to the scene in *Closer*, where Alice/Jane interacts with Larry (Clive Owen).

When we first see Echo in the blue wig, she is in the bedroom on her own and could be a child playing dress-up in their mother’s clothes. The rock music that builds gradually, however, alerts us that something other than childish games is afoot. Echo is depicted in a way that we have not seen her before, in a black costume with a laced bodice, which, together with the electric blue wig, intimate a more provocative Echo than the jeans-and-jersey girl-next-door we have seen to date. This brief scene consists of two shots, neither of which offers the viewer a direct view of what Echo is seeing. It is notable that what she is seeing is herself and that the viewer is watching her as she sees herself. The viewer does not see Echo’s perspective of herself, rather we see the camera’s perspective of Echo seeing herself. Mistry does not employ glance-object editing to indicate whose gaze the viewer is following (Doane, 1991c/1986:48). Instead of showing us a frontal shot of Echo’s face and then cutting to Echo’s reflection to show the viewer what Echo is looking at, Mistry places the camera in a position that suggests someone is observing Echo as in figures forty-eight to fifty.

The scene that follows immediately after, is a continuation of the bedroom scene, as Echo, in her provocative costume, performs a seductive dance for Derren in the lounge. The first shot of this scene is of Derren watching Echo (figure fifty-one). The cut from Echo watching herself in the mirror to Derren watching Echo, momentarily suggests that *he* has been watching her in the bedroom until the different lighting and the location register. While it may be physically impossible for Derren to have been watching Echo through the walls of the

bedroom, the cut to this shot of Derren intimates that Echo's pretence is for the benefit of Derren's gaze.



Figure 51. Derren watches Echo's seductive dance.



Figure 52. Wide shot of Echo's seductive dance.

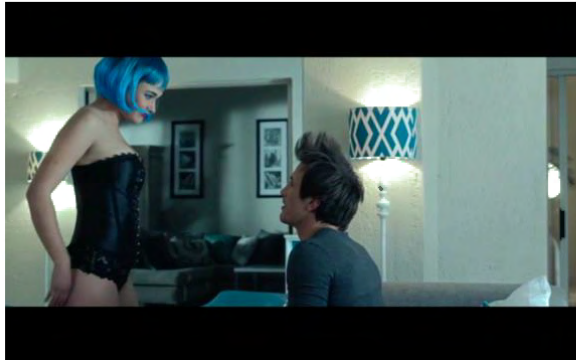


Figure 53. Medium long shot of Echo's seductive dance.



Figure 54. Echo's eyes seem important.

In the scene that occurs in the lounge, the camera is positioned external to the action throughout and we see neither character's perspective, nor an approximation of their perspectives, of what they are looking at. The camera is initially positioned so that Echo is in a quarter turn, and it follows Echo as she moves closer to Derren, ending in a profile shot of the two, but it does not show us her perspective. The blue eyeshadow that matches the wig accentuates Echo's eyes, suggesting their importance, but Mistry neither represents her eyes from a frontal perspective, nor does she show the viewer Echo's perspective. The viewer is constantly in the position of observer during this scene, watching the action from the side. Mistry resists giving Echo control over the gaze, even though the lighting and her dominant position in the frame draw our attention to her as a subject whose gaze is notable and expresses desire. As a result of this, and in keeping with Mulvey's argument that the patriarchal man cannot bear to be the object of the erotic gaze (1989a/1975:20), Mistry prevents Derren from being the object of the viewer's gaze. Notwithstanding Echo's

dominance in the frame then, her thoughts and intentions, communicated through her eyes, remain hidden from view.

The constant external camera position along with the framing that avoids Echo's eyes indicates Mistry's intention to focus attention on the performance of seduction. As mentioned above, the fact that Derren watching is the first shot of the action in the lounge, also suggests that Echo's performance in the blue wig is meant to capture Derren's gaze. In this way, Echo's performance may be read as being for the benefit of Derren's male gaze.

Using Doane's understanding of the masquerade as compensation for her transgression, I further interpret Echo's performance in the blue wig as reassurance that she is not usurping the male position. Doane, drawing on the work of Joan Riviere, explains that after the woman assumes the position of subject, that is the position of the man, she compensates for doing so through the performance of excessive femininity (1991b/1982:25). Echo has, prior to this scene in the story chronology, assumed the active male role as she bludgeoned Karen to death and did the same to the bar owner. Her performance in the blue wig thus serves as reassurance that she is not usurping this role, and this kind of assurance, according to Doane, would be directed at a gaze that is masculine (1991b/1982:25), supporting the identification of the external gaze as masculine. Echo's donning of the blue wig, the seductive black costume, and her dance are a masquerade of excessive femininity that reassures both the man onscreen and the male gaze that she knows her place as the passive woman to-be-looked-at.

Doane's theory of the masquerade as performance coincides with Judith Butler's argument that culture marks our bodies with meaning (2007/2006:12) that determines the traits assigned to a gender, and how a gender is performed (Butler, 2007/2006:34). The fact that Echo is able to switch from girl-next-door to seductress indicates, as Doane claims in her work on the masquerade, awareness that femininity is performance and that this awareness also suggests the ability to resist notions of femininity (1991b:25). This performance of gender also destabilises gender, including masculinity, as it demonstrates that gender is something that, like the costume she wears in the scene, can be put on and taken off. In this scene, then, Mistry suggests that women perform versions of femininity, which, as in the case of Echo in this scene, are not intrinsic, but for the reassurance of the surveilling male gaze. This reassurance is a ruse, however, because the woman and the male gaze know that she is not merely that which she performs.

Mulvey also argues that while the male inhabits and moves through the landscape in Classical Hollywood cinema, the woman on display becomes part of the scenery, rather than part of the action (1989a/1975:19-20), most notably in Von Sternberg's use of patriarchal cinematic language (1989a/1975:22). Here, Echo in the blue wig, with blue eyeshadow matches the lampshade, the cushions, and the chair in the lounge, reassuring the male gaze of her disinterest in becoming subject and inhabiting the masculine position. Echo, in this way, remains Mulvey's spectacle to-be-looked-at (1989a/1975:19-20). Echo's performance is thus for the benefit of Derren's male gaze and the masculinised gaze of the spectator. In the blue wig scene, Echo's performance is not only one of masquerade, because as she blends into the décor and becomes the spectacle to-be-looked-at, she also arrests the narrative.

With the scene in *Closer* (2004), Alice and Larry meet unexpectedly in a striptease club after their respective partners have fallen in love with each other and left them. Alice goes by the name Jane at the striptease club and Larry pays her to perform for him. The main difference between the *Impunity* and *Closer* scenes is the setting. The scene in *Closer* takes place in a striptease club with the understanding that interactions between the women and the men rely on the women's performances that are meant to satisfy the erotic gaze of the men. The role of women here is expressly to bear Mulvey's male gaze. A second difference is that in the *Closer* scene surveillance is part of the narrative as Alice/Jane points out the security cameras in the ceiling (figure fifty-five). These women are engaged in a masquerade in both senses of the word explained above in the study of the *Impunity* scene. They are pretending to be what they are not, and they are atoning for the transgressions of their everyday life where they assume the position of subject and gaze at the world around them. In the striptease club, the strippers performing in costume reassure the men that women know their place after all and will not appropriate the masculine role.



Figure 55. Larry becomes aware of the security cameras in the ceiling.

In her discussion on the look in *Closer*, Ciara O'Brien determines that Alice/Jane is in control of the gaze through being a voyeur of the lives of the other characters (2010). Drawing on the work of Anette Kuhn, O'Brien views anonymity as key to the voyeur's power (2010:51). In the striptease club, Larry demands to know her real name, and his refusal to believe that it is Jane, is indicative, for O'Brien, of Larry's inability to see Alice/Jane for who she really is. Because Larry is unable to grasp Alice's/Jane's true identity, she is in a position of voyeuristic control as she knows who he is and can see into his world (2010:51).

In the framing of the striptease club scene in *Closer*, director, Mike Nichols employs framing that shows the direct gaze of the characters as in figures fifty-six and fifty-seven, which Mistry does not do in the blue wig scene. The camera is also frequently positioned opposite the actors, representing Alice/Jane and Larry as they look, and approximating their perspectives through over-the-shoulder shots, or, as in figure fifty-seven, through a waist level shot. Nichols does frame the action from a wider more distant perspective at times (figures fifty-five and fifty-eight), but there is a balance of wide and close-up shots on the action.

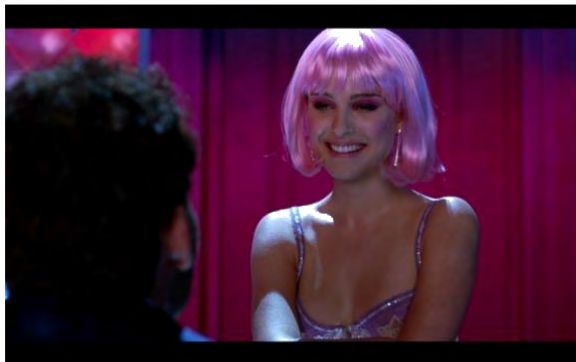


Figure 56. The camera frames Alice's/Jane's face.



Figure 57. Larry framed from the front.



Figure 58. A wider perspective on the action.

This comparison between the two scenes shows that while surveillance is made obvious in *Closer*, the camera position and framing also make the experience a more intimate one between Alice/Jane and Larry. In contrast, the camera position and framing in *Impunity's* blue wig scene make the experience one of distance and observation. In addition, Nichols represents the characters' eyes, which signals that their perspectives on the interaction is important, and feeds into the intimacy of the scene. In contrast, Mistry refrains from representations of her characters' eyes, suggesting that their subjectivities are secondary, and that the point of view of the camera is primary.

This comparative analysis uncovers that Echo's performance in the blue wig scene in *Impunity*, is not performed for her own pleasure, but that it is performed for the surveilling male gaze positioned outside of the action. The close study of the *Impunity* scene also shows that Echo's performance is a masquerade that serves to reassure the male gaze that she knows her place as a woman. Mistry suggests with this scene, that patriarchal society requires the heterosexual woman to prove and perform her femininity as proof that she knows her place, which, as Mulvey says, is to be on display and not engaged in action that challenges the masculine position (1989a/1975:19). The fact that the position of the gaze is external to the action for the duration of the scene, strongly suggests that the performance of femininity is *always* under surveillance.

CONCLUSION

This analysis of *Impunity* demonstrates that Mistry's use of the camera and the manner in which she represents the woman protagonist is not a straightforward reproduction of traditional patriarchal conventions. Mistry, the woman director, breaks with convention when she represents cunnilingus in the beach sex scene, as opposed to conventional penetrative sex or felatio. She further flouts Hollywood convention in the beach sex scene through representing Echo, the white woman protagonist, as experiencing pleasure through her body in contradiction to patriarchal conventions that insist women's bodies are meant for reproduction, and not for their own enjoyment (McFadden, 2003:52-54). The woman's experience of pleasure, however, in accordance with the patriarchal convention that Williams identifies, positions her body as the site of pleasure for the male gaze (2012:162).

The close study of the four scenes also shows that Mistry relinquishes representation that foregrounds the perspective of either protagonist. Instead, she favours a perspective that is

outside of the action that sexualises the woman's body and regards her as the spectacle to-be-looked-at. While Mistry discards the traditional male perspective that is internal to the action, the external perspective is nonetheless male aligned. This choice of an external gaze over that of the male lead and noting the theme of surveillance that arises from this perspective, suggests that women *and* men are frequently under surveillance. This external point of view draws attention to the representation and embodiment of the woman protagonist rather than the man, further suggesting that both characters are not equally monitored, but that the behaviour of the woman protagonist is the focus of this attention.

In keeping with Hollywood conventions, both Echo and Karen are punished for dominating the attention of the male-aligned gaze, and Karen is punished for daring to use her own gaze. Echo's punishment occurs when she is shot at the end of the film, as described earlier in the film's synopsis, eliminating the woman as the focus of the male-aligned gaze. Even though Mistry does not use the gaze of the male protagonist to direct the viewer's attention, I have shown that she does use a masculine gaze, and that, conforming with the male-female power relations of patriarchal cinema, which require dominant women to be chastened, Mistry metes out punishment to these two women in *Impunity*. As in *Nommer 37*, the surveilling male gaze is interested with the women's behaviour. This interest is not curiosity, it is concerned with controlling women and punishes the women in both films when they transgress their prescribed passive roles.

Karen, the femme fatale, is not only punished because she dominates the attention of the gaze, she is also punished because she is bold enough to use her gaze. As Williams and Doane have shown, the woman's gaze threatens the traditional male role in cinema, which requires her punishment, which might mean she is killed through the narrative (Williams, 1984:570; Doane, 1991a:2). In keeping with this tradition, Karen, whose bold gaze inspires Echo's jealousy, is dead by the end of the scene.

The women in the sex scenes are embodied in ways that are notably non-everyday, by which I mean that Echo, for example, is represented completely naked in the beach sex scene (figure twenty-eight), and Karen is represented topless amongst visitors to her home (figure forty-four). I have argued that these fully and semi-naked representations of the women are coded for the erotic viewing pleasure of a heterosexual male gaze because the men in these scenes are not required to expose those parts of their bodies that remain hidden in daily life. In these

instances, Mistry reproduces patriarchal conventions that eroticise women for the male gaze and require women to reveal their bodies in ways that men are not expected to. The white women in *Impunity* are on display and bear the male gaze (Mulvey, 1989a/1975:19-20). The men, by comparison, even though they do not drive the narrative through their gaze, are not required to “bear the burden of sexual objectification” (Mulvey, 1989a/1975:20).

My interpretation of Echo’s representation in the blue wig scene is that she is masquerading as a femme fatale. It is a masquerade because up to this point, she has been represented as less sexually assertive and in her girl-next-door attire of jeans and jersey. After this scene her representation returns to that of the girl-next-door, suggesting that Echo in the blue wig and the black bodysuit are part of a charade. Echo’s performance of the femme fatale underscores the fact that this way of being a woman, like other ways of being a woman, is a performance and not intrinsic. I conclude about this scene that both the woman and the male gaze, aware of gender as performance, are aware of its tenuous nature.

Apart from the suggestion of surveillance, the suggestion of performance *for* a surveilling gaze builds over the four scenes studied. The interpretation I make from this is, similarly to *Nommer 37*, that women are aware that their behaviour is monitored, and they perform femininity to reassure this gaze that they will not usurp the masculine role. Furthermore, women who do transgress their prescribed gendered roles, will be punished. I have also shown with my analysis of the rape scene that Mistry makes the viewer complicit in the violence wrought on the woman’s body through the surveilling gaze.

I conclude that while Mistry’s unconventional use of cinematic language is a commentary on patriarchal language, her more conventional positioning of the white woman for the male aligned gaze, undermines this commentary. Mistry’s self-conscious use of the external surveilling gaze implicates viewers and herself in the violence inflicted on women but does not propose alternative ways of regarding women.

CONCLUSION

LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD

Laura Mulvey's identification of the patriarchal male gaze in Classical Hollywood cinema came into circulation half a lifetime ago in 1975. Mulvey has said that the aim of the study presented in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" was to determine the gendered nature of the gaze imposed on the viewer by the language of Classical Hollywood cinema, regardless of the sex of the viewer (1989b/1981:29). While Mulvey's theory was published nearly forty-six years ago, the films she was studying were even older, dating back to the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. These dates may make the ideas seem dated and irrelevant, but this study of *Nommer 37* and *Impunity* demonstrates the pertinence of understanding and applying the male gaze to South African film. The filmmakers and the films in this study are situated at a huge social and temporal remove from the filmmakers and films that Mulvey was studying. Nonetheless, I have shown that the gaze that the directors use to lead viewers through their films is the domain of a male gaze. This study shows that a male gaze is imposed on viewers by two Black woman directors in South Africa, largely reproducing, rather than transforming cinematic conventions.

The narratives and the worlds of the stories in *Nommer 37* and *Impunity* differ from each other in terms of the race and class of the characters, and where the action occurs. The analysis presented in this thesis illuminates striking similarities between the films, nonetheless. The films are similar first of all, in that both directors introduce unconventional elements in the representation of the narratives. In *Nommer 37*, Dumisa introduces the theme of surveillance and the predatory gaze of the gangsters. A further unconventional element is the representation of the woman protagonist as active and the male as passive. In *Impunity*, Mistry flouts convention with the representation of cunnilingus, in contrast to traditional representations of sex that favour penetrative sex or felatio. Her application of an external gaze to guide the viewer through the narrative is also an uncommon technique, and, as in *Nommer 37*, also suggests surveillance.

This unorthodox representation allows both directors to comment on power structures in society. Dumisa's use of the surveilling gaze at Pam, and her brutalisation highlight the

precarious position of working-class women in South African society. Mistry's positioning of the gaze as external to the action alerts the viewer to the surveillance of the characters, but also implicates the audience in this surveillance.

While both directors apply unconventional techniques in the narrative, overall, I find they reproduce patriarchal cinematic language in their representation of the women in their films. Both women are punished for transgressing the traditional passive role of the woman, with Echo's, the white woman's punishment being more severe and ending with her death. A further similarity is that both women are sexual within a conventional heterosexual relationship, and in *Impunity*, Echo acts to ensure it remains this way.

Both directors curb the gazes of their woman protagonists and in so doing, prevent bell hooks's "new kind of subject" (2003:104) from emerging. Admittedly, some of the more jarring and unconventional elements of their styles, could prompt viewers into a reflective or critical position. In *Nommer 37*, Dumisa allows Pam to look, but only allows the audience to see what she is looking at in a few instances when she is Lawyer's flat. In contrast to Randal's look that contains knowledge of threats and drives the narrative, Pam's gaze is imperfect. In *Impunity*, Echo's gaze is more heavily constrained as her gaze is not represented directly and Mistry foregrounds a gaze that is external to the action over Echo's. While Dumisa and Mistry reproduce patriarchal conventions, these are not always straight reproductions, but are used to comment on patriarchal conventions of cinema and on the position of women in society.

A key discovery of my research is that themes of surveillance emerge in both films through the way both the white and the Black woman are subjected to a controlling male gaze. In *Nommer 37* there is a paternalistic male gaze that observes Pam, but also the predatory gaze of the gangsters that includes the threat of sexual punishment. Pam is aware of both gazes watching over her but responds impertinently as she feels Randal's eyes on her. Confronted by the threatening gaze of the gangster, however, she lowers her own gaze as she passes them, ceding control of her environment and of herself to the gangsters. In *Impunity* the surveilling gaze does not belong to a male character, but I determine that it is male aligned through the manner in which it sexualises Echo. The position of this gaze outside of the action, is key to my reading of surveillance in *Impunity*. The self-conscious application of this external gaze draws the spectator's attention to the surveillance and implicates them in

this controlling gaze of the woman. Like Pam, Echo is aware of the surveilling gaze, but behaves differently for this gaze. Echo performs a version of femininity to reassure the surveilling gaze that she knows her place as a woman and will not challenge the masculine position of authority. Echo's performance for the male gaze, while reassuring on one level, is also destabilising through the knowledge of gender as performance. The fact that femininity may be performed, and performed in different ways, insinuates the same possibility for masculinity.

Both Dumisa and Mistry draw attention to the surveillance of women in society. The gaze at Echo, while still controlling her behaviour, is not as predatory and menacing as the gaze that watches over Pam. This difference suggests that the male gaze at the Black woman is a more violently controlling gaze than that directed at the white woman. I conclude that this relentless surveillance of women in both films indicates an awareness of the power women, regardless of race, possess and the need to keep it in check, instead of allowing it to flourish and discover what it could offer the world. Both Dumisa and Mistry suggest that society is aware of the controlling nature of gender, but neither offers alternative ways of regarding women and gender.

While both directors comment on the position of women in society, it is notable that they have chosen to represent communities outside of their own apartheid-prescribed racial groups. This is significant in a South African context where apartheid divisions endure and indicates, as discussed in chapter two on *Impunity*, a curiosity about other groups, unfamiliar experiences, and ideas of belonging. As Dumisa and Mistry imagine experiences beyond their own, they are reaching across the gap that apartheid cleaved between its citizens. Borrowing from Bhabha's interpretation of *Black Skin*, it seems that as Dumisa and Mistry explore the imaginings of their psyches, the worlds they have conjured reveal remarkable similarities in the way these two directors understand the social reality of gendered experiences across race.

A study of the production context and audience reception are both beyond the scope of this thesis, but they present the opportunity for further research around the films. As alluded to above, the unconventional stylistic elements present in both films, could prompt a critical or reflective viewing position amongst spectators, and a study into the reception of the films could explore, for example, the extent to which this occurs amongst viewers. A study of the

production context and the intention of the producers would also demonstrate how far their intentions were realised, compared to the interpretations I have drawn from the texts. Subsequent to *Nommer 37*, Dumisa has moved into television direction, at the helm of the Netflix series *Blood & Water* (2020), making this a worthwhile space to analyse for a comparison of gender representation. Mistry continues to produce films of a more experimental nature, presenting an avenue for comparative studies of her work. Some of Mistry's subsequent film work includes *When I Grow Up I Want to Be a Black Man* (2017), and *Cause of Death* (2020). This study shows that close analyses of the work of women directors yields interesting and valuable findings, presenting a strong case for more close analyses of the work of woman directors. Stephina Zwane, Meg Rickards, Jayan Moodley, Sara Blecher, and Jenna Bass are amongst the few women, who are directing films in South Africa. The films of these women present the chance for scholars to pay critical attention in the form of textual analyses, audience studies, and the impact of the production context on their work.

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APPENDIX

SOUTH AFRICAN CINEMA RELEASES BY DIRECTOR'S GENDER		
	WOMEN	MEN
2010	1	23
2011	2	20
2012	3	16
2013	2	23
2014	1	22
2015	6	16
2016	0	21
2017	4	19
2018	5	17

Table 1. Summary of South African fiction film cinema releases by gender for 2010 to 2018 (NFVF 2018).