

Other as Spectacle: Women, Queerness, and the Male Gaze

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## Abstract:

This project, *Other as Spectacle*, aims to create an interactive installation that explores what it is like to be *othered* by the male gaze, and through the experience establish a new understanding in the viewer the harm the male gaze has on women and queer individuals. The theme of the work surrounds the concept of a masquerade—the user steps in front of an interactive projection and finds themselves in the role of the ‘outsider.’ The viewer will face their own reflection in a mirror, and witness as their image is distorted—their reflection on the screen slowly morphing into the figure of a monster as the characters on the screen gawk at them.

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	4
Theoretical Framework .....	5
Precedents .....	10
Process .....	16
Conclusion & Reflection .....	27
Bibliography .....	29

## Introduction

Within visual media, gaze is a signifier of power. It determines whose perspective is presented and how others fit into that world view. Women, people of color, LGBTQ individuals, and the disabled have all been defined largely by how they are viewed from the perspective of those who are white, cisgender, straight, able-bodied, and male. By being defined through the perspective of those with privilege, these minority groups are denied empathy and understanding in the ways they are portrayed. Not only does this keep others from understanding them, but people within these minority groups will often internalize the narrative that has been created for them. They are defined as *the other*; separate and strange compared to the assumed spectator. Through this project, the concept of the male gaze and its impact on women and queer individuals will be explored. The male gaze functions as a framework that assumes the viewer is straight and male, and therefore the visuals within that framework are created to adhere to the straight man's interest. Under the male gaze, women are valued primarily as sex objects and limited to a specific gender role, while queer people are treated as objects to be feared or ignored.



Figure 1 & 2

Other as Spectacle

This project aims to create an interactive installation that explores what it is like to be othered by the male gaze, and through the experience provide the viewer with a new understanding of the harm the

male gaze has on women and queer individuals. The theme of the work surrounds the concept of a masquerade, the user steps in front of an interactive projection and finds themselves in the role of the 'outsider' or, in this case, 'the monster.' The viewer will face their own reflection in a mirror, and witness as their image is distorted. Their monstrous reflection will be contrasted with the figures of the masquerade, whose design adheres to their respective roles under the male gaze. The user will be unable to participate in that world projected onto the mirror. Their own reflection will block them from having a clear view of the images on the screen. They will play the role of the spectacle, their reflection on the screen slowly morphing into the figure of a monster as the characters on the screen gawk at them.

*Other as Spectacle* builds on precedents of feminist theory, queer theory, and interpretations of the horror genre. These concepts will be explored in this paper, as well as referential works that explore the themes in unique or significant ways. The paper is split into three sections, the theoretical framework, precedents, and process. The theoretical framework section will explore the theories that support and help define this project. The precedents section examines how previous works have explored similar themes and what can be learned from those references. Finally, the process section details the design choices made during the project's development.

## Theoretical Framework

Laura Mulvey first defined the concept of the male gaze in her 1975 article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, which has functioned as an anchor in discussions of the conscious and unconscious implications behind how women are depicted in film and similar media. Mulvey describes the male gaze as the visual language that defines the woman as an erotic object to be displayed for the purpose of pleasing the assumed male audience (533). The male gaze helped to define early cinema and is prevalent in all forms of visual works. The objectification of women means that a woman's purpose in media is not to enhance or drive the narrative, rather, she is a detour on the way. When the camera turns to focus on

a female character, everything slows to allow a detailed look at her presence, the shape of her body (538). Under the male gaze, women are the spectacle.

Linda Williams, in her article *When the Woman Looks*, applies this critical interpretation to depictions of women within the horror genre. There is a secondary power dynamic established by the gaze of a woman within this context. After all, the male gaze only holds interest in a woman being pleasurable to look at, and not at a woman's personal pleasure in looking. When a woman views a work of horror, she will often find depictions of a woman's powerlessness against "rape, mutilation, and murder" (15). Both a woman's physical image and her pain are spectacle for a male audience. Within the narrative itself, the woman is often punished for looking, for investigating. This is a significant component surrounding the monster within the horror genre. The woman will look to the monster, will even find a personal affinity with the monster, but what she will find by looking will also horrify her (Williams 18).

There is another interplay involved when a woman shares the screen with a monster. There is a distinct similarity in the ways they are both portrayed. A male-coded monster may not explicitly be depicted within an erotic lens, but the monster is still there to be observed, gawked at. Even through her own horror, this is something that the woman recognizes in herself. An affinity with the monster as another "exhibitionist-object." Although one of them is looked at out of desire, and the other in fascinated horror, the visual framework used to depict them is much the same. They are both a spectacle to the male gaze (Williams 20-21).

However, there is precedent for horror tropes to be used to explore female agency, specifically within the genre of Gothic Horror. The term *Gothic* refers to works related to each other through similar tropes and themes, defined largely by the narrative exploration of fear and terror through the supernatural and strange. Literary Gothic became popular in the late eighteenth century at a time of social upheaval when religious fears had begun to weaken in influence. Instead, people of the era looked

to the Gothic narrative for emotional catharsis (Moers 90). While getting a start in the 1700s, many Gothic works continued to be published and proved to be influential in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This wide berth of work has made categorizing Gothic works a challenge. The works vary in perspectives, time periods, and context. Anne Williams describes what connects the Gothic genre as fear of the other, while recognizing that the term will always be relative to its context (18).

Many of Gothic works and the monsters featured in them: Frankenstein, Dracula, among others, have continued to influence future generations through media, and have been a particular influence on the male dominated cinema of horror. However, the works of the Female Gothic from writers like Ann Radcliffe, Charlotte Bronte, and of course, the writer of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley, used the genre to explore concepts of personhood as well as the female experience. The genre of Female Gothic Horror is characterized by the use of tropes established through works of Male Gothic horror and adapting them as tools to depict oppression within the female experience (Badley 103).

Unlike most of the Horror genre, which consistently punishes women for observing, the heroine in Gothic horror learns to understand herself and her surroundings by investigating the dark world around her. She will lift the veil and explore the secret rooms around her, bringing hidden traumas and secrets to light. Through this, she will escape the trauma of the past (Williams 171). The social oppression of women is also explored symbolically through horror tropes as well. Diana Wallace suggests in her article *Uncanny Story: The Ghost Story As Female Gothic* that ghost stories were used by female writers to explore their feelings of powerlessness, their separation from other women and their exclusion from a patriarchal society (1).

By looking back at the elements of Female Gothic horror and the tradition of co-opting tropes established for the male gaze, a similar connection can be made for the queer community and their connection both with the male gaze and the genre of Gothic horror. In *Imps of the Perverse: Gay*

*Monsters in Film*, Michael William Saunders explains queerness in relationship to an outsider's gaze. He explains that the argument within anti-gay rhetoric is built heavily on the idea that what makes gay people dangerous is their visibility (2). For queer people to exist in secret offers little perceived harm to the status quo, but if queer people are open about their identities and lives, then to accept them means to validate their existence and choices. Instead, a heteronormative society has been taught to avert their gaze from queer people. This is what fundamentally connects queerness to monsters. After all, a monster often functions as the manifestation of the consequences for deviating from a normative structure (Saunders 2). Be it the wolf that eats children who stray from home in a fairy tale or the bloodthirsty murderer who impales teenagers after they have had sex in a slasher movie, monsters function as a cautionary tale. A monster exists to be witnessed and to be feared, but to look too long means to become immune to the horror of it (Saunders 2). To stare at a monster, means to be tempted by deviancy.

There is an intersection between this idea of the queer monster and women as viewed within the male gaze. For queer women, they exist within these concepts simultaneously. Their sexuality is acknowledged solely as a spectacle for heterosexual men. Transwomen are denied agency or respect, often treated exclusively as a means of luring straight men into deviancy, if they are acknowledged as women at all. Just as often, they are treated as the monster, a spectacle to be gawked at by a transphobic and cis-normative audience. Always, a queer person is the outsider, a deviation from social norms.

In fact, queer women and lesbians were reoccurring elements of the Gothic narrative. These women were either doomed to an early death or defined by violence. The queer woman is the 'monstrous-feminine,' and the subject of derision and fear (Palmer 14). Within the fiction, a queer woman will often be described as grotesque, a creature of excess completely alien to the heteronormative ideal of the woman of the house (Palmer 15). The Gothic lesbian is a monster and a fright, a representation of violence against men.

However, while the trope of the 'monstrous feminine' was established through early Gothic works, it has also been co-opted by queer writers to explore the lesbian experience within the Gothic narrative. By structuring queer narratives through a historical Gothic lens, queer women are able to construct a personal history and identity, despite the fact that history has largely erased the existence of queer women (Palmer 20). By recreating narratives within these historical spaces, they are able to see themselves represented in the past, helping them feel a personal connection with their identity.

What bridges the otherness of women and queerness together, beyond where they intersect as identities, is the way they both are restrained and defined by the concept of gaze. To be allowed a gaze is to have power over yourself and over those that you observe. What creates a monster is the simple matter of being defined by someone else's gaze; to be othered and defined by that difference. A Gothic heroine may find herself in tragic circumstances, but she is allowed to look, to understand her surroundings and find catharsis for herself.

By creating an interactive piece that places the viewer in the place of the other, the intent is to help the viewer conceptualize harm done by the male gaze. This project aims to reflect how the male gaze both alienates women and queer people and distorts their views of themselves. A society that is structured around heteronormative constructs that appeal to the interests of straight men will inevitably other those who do not adhere to its rules. However, these rules were built by prioritizing the perspective of men with social power. This project will place everyone who views it, even those who benefit from the male gaze, in the position of losing the power of their own gaze. While placing the viewer in the role of a monster, visual design will be used to express what it is to be alienated by a cis-normative and heteronormative society.

## Precedents

This project aims to use elements of the Gothic Horror genre to explore the way that women and queer individuals are depicted under the male gaze. Therefore, the references for this project explore, either intentionally or unintentionally, ways that women and queer people are viewed. These influential works are a combination of the historical; works from the period that Gothic Horror came into popularity, and the modern; works that use technology to visualize the harm and complexity of living under a heteronormative male gaze.

In order to visualize the genre of Gothic Horror, an important initial precedent was the illustrative work used to depict the female Gothic novels of the time. Edmund Dulac was one of many artists who illustrated Charlotte Brontë's novel, *Jane Eyre* (Figures 3 & 4).

His works are particularly evocative due to the nearly granular texture of the colors within the work, as well as the heightened contrast of shadows and light. The eye is drawn to the shapes of the figures in the illustrations. Their silhouettes are also in full frame within the illustration. The figures are often the brightest part of the image, with everything in the background less detailed, and obscured by shadow.

This gives the figures both a sense of narrative importance and presence.

In interpreting these works under the concept of the "gaze," visually, Jane is often depicted in a state of watching. She is investigating her surroundings, but she is also always placed in the frame so that the viewer can clearly see her. She is both looking and being looked at.

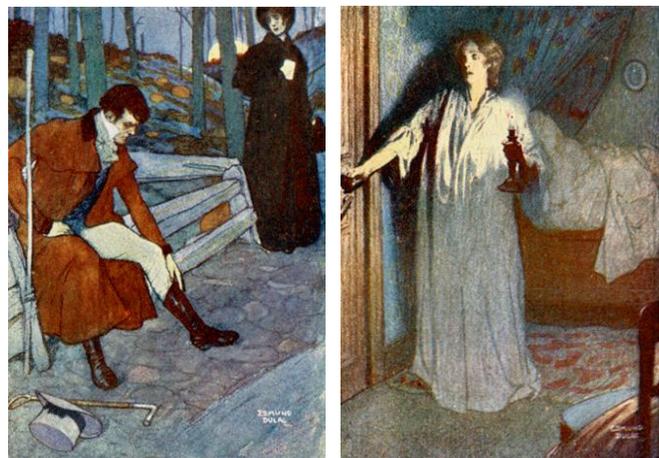


Figure 3 & 4

Dulac, Edmund. "I now drew near him again" "My first impulse was to rise and fasten the bolt" Illustration for *Jane Eyre*, J.M. Dent and company, 1905.

A work also created within the general time period that Gothic horror grew into popularity is Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Bal du moulin de la galette* (Figure 5). While this work is not an example of horror, it does visualize the social dynamics of the time period. It is also a clear example of gaze depicted in a visual work. Although the image has both male and female subjects, there is a significant difference in how they are portrayed. Several of the women are framed in the center of the image, particularly the two women in the foreground. There is also a woman dancing just behind them, visually emphasized by the open space around her. The light source of the image is from the fragments of light coming through the trees, but it is the women who are mostly illuminated by light. In contrast, many of the male subjects are placed along the side of the image or are obscured by their nearby female partner. The man closest to the foreground is turned completely away from viewer to look at the two women in the center of the frame. Due to this framing, the viewer will instinctively feel a connection to this male figure, as they are both looking out at the view before them. For the few men whose faces are in view, their gazes can be followed to the female subjects, drawing the eye directly back to the primary focus of the work, the women.



Figure 5

Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. *Bal du moulin de la galette*, Oil on Canvas, 1876.

Edward Gorey (Figure 6) is a contemporary artist who creates images referencing the clothing and visual elements of the late 1800s to early 1900s. However, unlike the earlier pieces referenced, he instills a sense of the uncanny in his characters. The



Figure 6

Gorey, Edward. *It wrenched off the horn of the gramophone, / And could not be persuaded to leave it alone*. Illustration for *The Doubtful Guest*. Garden City: Doubleday & Company Inc, Pen and ink on paper, 1957.

expressions are exaggerated. The thick lines in their face cause them to look haunted. The rough, sketched lines are a stark contrast to the empty background. Edward Gorey's work functions between the realm of the mundane and the horrific, while still maintaining a levity to the subjects. The techniques used in Gorey's work are referential to the time of Gothic Horror while being evocative in a way that signifies a sense of horror and the uncanny clear to the audience.

Davy and Kristin McGuire's *Starkers* (Figures 7 & 8) delves into the concept of the gaze directly. By projecting on a classical statue at the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, the statue is given the illusion of speaking directly to the audience. The projection created by Davy and Kristin McGuire gives a narrative to the existing sculpture, providing a new interpretation of the work. The statue acknowledges the gaze of the audience, speaks of their possible judgements and fascination with her form. The work explores the very concept of a statue in the shape of a woman, imagining her sculpted arms as limitations. She is

frozen in the moment, unable to explore her own beauty, at most she can only be a vessel for someone else's artistic vision. By using projection mapping this work has a unique presence. The existing statue was created to draw in the eye, her body curved at the waist and the carved lines of the fabric acting as a skirt helps move the viewer's eyes along the body. By the simple act of having the statue "look back" at the audience, the viewer begins to question their own gaze of the sculpted body.



*Figure 7 & 8*

McGuire, Davy and Kristin. *Starkers*. Commissioned by Culture 24 for Museums at Night, Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, Projection Mapping, 2015.

Similarly, Lynn Hershman Leeson explored gaze and agency in her installation *A Room of One's Own* (Figures 9 & 10). The interactive piece involves a small room displayed with miniature furniture, only seen by the audience through a viewing apparatus. When the user approaches the apparatus to look at the scene, a voice of a woman tells the user to stop looking. Included in the miniature room is a small screen, which projects the image of the user's eye, placing them within the art piece under the role of a voyeur. The experience of the work has a fundamental tension. In order to see the installation, the user must accept their role as the voyeur, ignoring the pleas of a fictional woman. In this piece, the gaze is given tangibility, the user is forced into recognizing the power of their own gaze, and the denial of agency of the fictional woman who does not want to be gazed at.

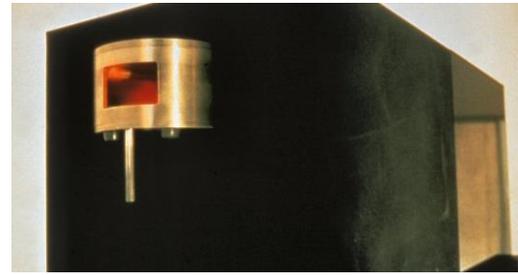


Figure 9 & 10

Lynn Hershman Leeson. *A Room of One's Own*. Installation. 1990.

*Bluebeard's Bride* (Figures 11 & 12) is a tabletop role-playing game based on the fairytale of Bluebeard. During the era of the female Gothic novel, it was common for writers to explore the stories of Bluebeard or Cupid and Psyche under the lens of Gothic horror (Williams 160). Similarly, this game explores the female experience by establishing the categories women are forced into, and the limited power they have



Figure 11 & 12

Beltran, Whitney, et al. *Bluebeard's Bride*. Magpie Games, 2019.

<https://www.magpiegames.com/bluebeards-bride/>

within those restrictions. The player characters can choose from a small list of female roles, including the Virgin, the Mother, and the Witch. As the players try to navigate the life of Bluebeard's wife, they are faced with terrors and trauma with little personal power to combat it.

In an interview with Vice (Baume), Beltran speaks on the differences the creators found in the experiences of predominantly male groups compared to predominantly female groups. Play groups that were predominantly female often found the exploration cathartic. Some players would find themselves relating to the experiences of the bride and, within the space created by the role-playing game, they would feel safe to take risks against a man who could harm them. On the other hand, groups made up predominantly of men would often find themselves overwhelmed by the tension of the game, expecting to be able to fight off any threats and instead battling with a feeling of helplessness. Some men would come out of the game feeling angry and then later with some thought, would understand an element of the female perspective that they hadn't before.

Finally, *We Know the Devil* (Figures 13 & 14) is an interactive visual novel that focuses on three queer teenagers at a Christian camp. They are charged with the duty of watching each other to ensure that the Devil doesn't tempt them. As the player, you are in control of how the group splits off, and depending on your choices, the character who interacts with the others the least will find themselves morphed into a beautiful yet monstrous creature that is the embodiment of their inner desires and pain.

With limited visuals, *We Know the Devil* still manages to be deeply evocative with its use of a grainy, retro soundtrack reminiscent of Horror films from the 1970s and 80's, such as John Carpenter's *Halloween*. Visually, the color palette of gray makes the moments of intense color alarming to the viewer. As the girls begin to take on a monstrous



Figure 13

*We Know the Devil*. Date Nighto, Visual Novel, 2015.

form, the lines of the images become chaotic. The lines of color used on the characters become thick and uneven. The illustrative style matches the emotions of the moment. Distressing, confusing, but still beautiful.



Figure 14

*We Know the Devil*. Date Nighto, Visual Novel, 2015.

Although *We Know the Devil* builds on visual and audio precedents within a style of Horror that is in many ways different from Gothic horror tropes, it is a useful reference as an example of how queer anxieties can be expressed within the horror genre. Throughout the narrative of *We Know the Devil*, there is very little outside conflict. Instead, tension is built through the alienation the characters feel within the camp and their inner conflict over their personal desires. To be seen by the Devil means to acknowledge the hidden parts of themselves, something they have been forced to lock away from and have learned to hate about themselves. In the end, the girls learn to accept themselves by confiding in each other, together embracing their monstrous forms.

By building on these precedents, this project aims to create an evocative experience that forces the user to become aware of their own relationship to the male gaze. Like *Starkers*, it will be built with projection mapping, but instead of onto a sculpture, it will be cast on a mirror. This way, there will be a relationship between the user's gaze and the gaze of the characters in the mirror. As the user looks at the changing screen, the reflection will become aware of them as well. The characters in the mirror space will react to the user as *the other*. As in *We Know the Devil*, the user will have become the monster. The visual references mentioned here will also help to create a work that visually signifies the Gothic horror tropes it is inspired by. In the end, the goal of the project is to have an impact similar to *Bluebeard's Bride*. An

experience that leaves the user with a new understanding of the perspective of women and queer people.

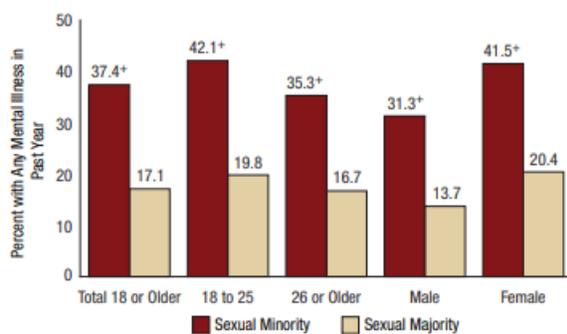
## Process

Each step in the development of this project, the aim was to answer a direct research question. This section has been split between research questions and the answering conclusion.

### 1) How does representation impact women and queer individuals' lives and personal identity?

The first step in the development of *Other as Spectacle* involved research into the mental health of LGBTQ individuals. The research article published by the National Survey on Drug Use and Health *Sexual Orientation and Estimates of Adult Substance on Drug Use and Mental Health* revealed that mental illness was often much higher for sexual minorities than the sexual majority within the same age range and gender (Medley 16). The study *LGBT people and suicidality in youth* showed that the factors that

**Figure 13. Any Mental Illness in the Past Year among Sexual Minority and Sexual Majority Adults Aged 18 or Older, by Age Group and Sex: Percentages, 2015**



**Figure 15. Any Mental Illness Excluding Serious Mental Illness in the Past Year among Sexual Minority and Sexual Majority Adults Aged 18 or Older, by Age Group and Sex: Percentages, 2015**

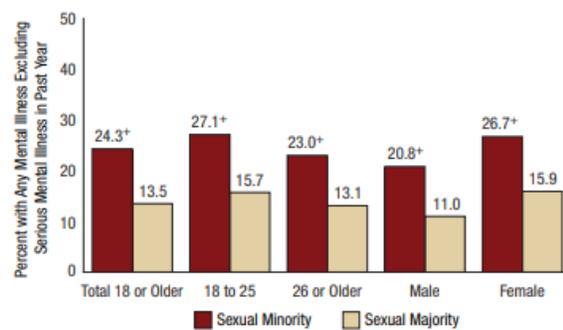


Figure 15 & 16

Medley, Grace, et al. "Sexual Orientation and Estimates of Adult Substance Use and Mental Health: Results from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health." *NSDUH Data Review*, 2016, pp. 1–54.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-SexualOrientation-2015/NSDUH-SexualOrientation-2015/NSDUH-SexualOrientation-2015.pdf>.

contribute to suicidal behavior among LGBT youth include homophobia, social isolation, substance abuse, and parental and sexual abuse (Rivers 1).

The research made it clear that in order to express the aspect of the queer experience that is related to mental health, the work would need to delve into concepts around alienation and social anxiety. The impact of media on these factors was further explained in the Theoretical Frameworks section.

## 2) What is the male gaze and how does it impact representation of women and queer individuals?

As detailed in the Theoretical Framework's section, early cinema developed a visual language built on the objectification of women. The male gaze has existed prior to cinema, developed through centuries of artwork created for and by men, but the camera further enhanced the power of the "gaze" placing the viewer in the position of actively observing.

What makes the male gaze structurally harmful is how it categorizes and restricts how gender and sexuality is displayed on screen. This in turn influences how individuals view their own gender and sexuality, and how they view the gender and sexuality of others.

## 3) How has the male gaze been explored within feminist art installations?

As explored in the Reference section, two works that engaged directly with gaze are *Starkers* [Figure 2] and *Room of One's Own* [Figure 3]. What these works have in common is how they create an engagement with physical space and inanimate objects, giving focus to what it means to be looked at. While *Starkers* does this playfully, creating a character out of a classic statue who speaks out to her

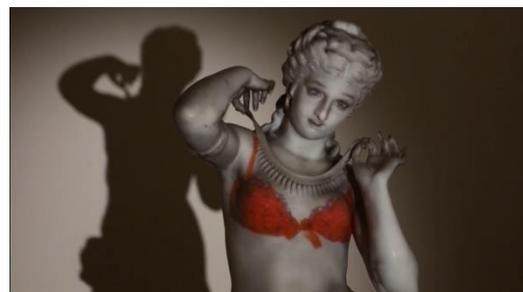


Figure 17

McGuire, Davy and Kristin. *Starkers*. Commissioned by Culture 24 for Museums at Night, Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, Projection Mapping, 2015.

audience with an air of tongue-and-cheek, *Room of One's Own* instead makes the user's gaze feel invasive and uncomfortable.

The aim with *Other as Spectacle* was to create an installation piece that makes the user aware of the power of gaze by having them be the one who is being gazed at. In order to accomplish this, a projection was cast onto a one-way mirror.

The use of a one-way mirror gives the installation an added immersive element by making the user's reflection a part of the experience. As the user looks onto the screen, they are also blocked by their own reflection in the mirror.



Figure 18

Lynn Hershman Leeson. *Room of One's Own*. Installation. 1990.

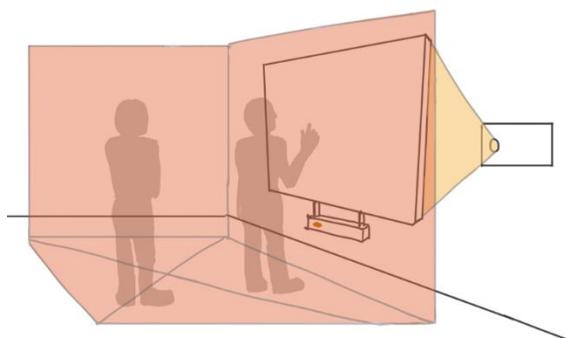


Figure 19

Other as Spectacle. Spatial Description

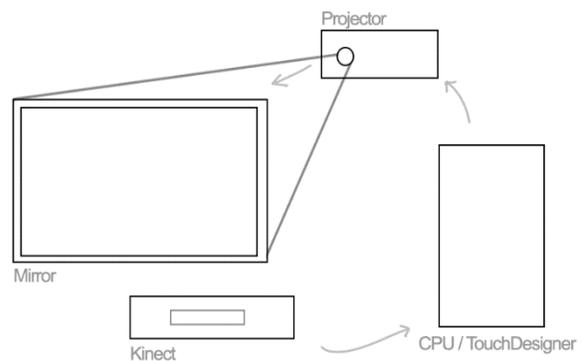


Figure 20

Other as Spectacle: Schematic

#### 4) What is the value in using horror to critique the male gaze?

As explained in the Theoretical Framework section, the horror genre is strongly tied to the male gaze in its established visual language. Early cinema horror films were heavily influenced by horror literature such as *Phantom of the Opera*, *Frankenstein*, and *Dracula*. Therefore, cinema has historically adapted the structure of horror in literature into visual language.

As both the established Theoretical frameworks and Precedents have shown, horror has been historically repurposed and deconstructed to express a new point of view. Gothic Horror specifically, was developed largely by female writers, taking the same tropes that influenced early cinema and recontextualizing them within the perspective of the female experience of the era.

5) How can an interactive installation piece give the user the sense of engaging with a Gothic Horror work?

The design and visual elements of the installation were developed to reference the feminist term of the “masquerade,” coined by Luce Irigaray. The concept of the masquerade is a frequent element of Gothic Horror, such as is in Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Masque of the Red Death*, but the term *masquerade* is also used in Feminism to describe the performative nature of women who attempt to take back their agency by embracing their role under the male gaze. As Luce Irigaray explains, “The masquerade has to be understood as what women do in order to recuperate some element of desire, to participate in men’s desire, but at the price of renouncing their own. In the masquerade, they submit to the dominant economy of desire in an attempt to remain on the market in spite of everything. But they are there as objects for sexual enjoyment, not those who enjoy” (133).

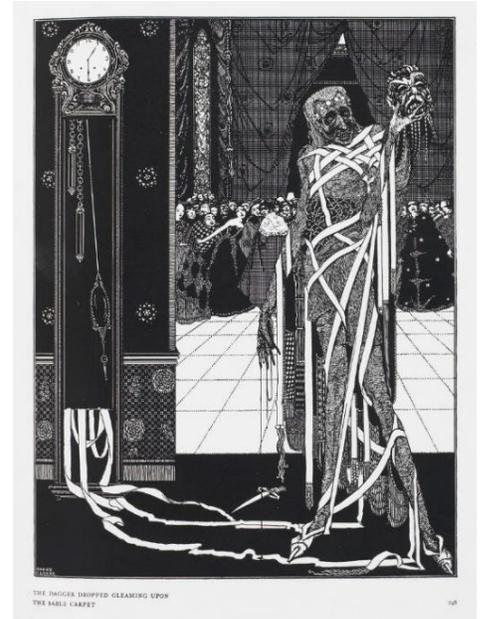


Figure 21

Clarke, Harry. "The dagger dropped gleaming upon the sable carpet". From *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*. London : G. G. Harrap & Co., 1919.

The concept of the masquerade acknowledges that those who are defined by the male gaze will often find ways to survive within it, whether it means internalizing the role given to them or even taking part in defending those social restrictions.

Extensive research was done to emulate the clothing and decorative style of the Victorian era, which was when Gothic Horror was popularized. Much of the fashion of the time period was documented through fashion magazines and have been republished in books such as 'Victorian Fashions & Costumes from Harper's Bazar.'



Figure 22 & 23

Blum, Stella. *Victorian Fashions and Costumes from Harper's Bazar, 1867-1898*. Dover Publications, Inc., 1974. pp. 103 & 163.

## 6) How can anxiety be expressed through visual language within the horror genre?

The genre of horror has clearly defined how anxiety can be expressed in visual language. It was important to consider precedents at this stage.



Figure 24

Stanley Kubrick. *The Shining*. Elstree Studios. 1980.



Figure 25

Other as Spectacle: Setting

In building on the concept of a masquerade, it was determined that the setting of the installation would be a ballroom. To create a sense of unease in a limited space, the area was designed to mimic the visual of a wide angle. This frame type in cinema creates a sense of distance between the camera and figures within the frame. As seen from the classic visual in *The Shining* [figure 7], the figures of twin girls are shot from a far distance, their obscured forms are contrasted with the boy in the foreground and the walls create strong angles within the frame.



Figure 26

Oz Perkins. *I am the Pretty Thing That Lives in the House*. Netflix. 2016.



Figure 27

Other as Spectacle: Shapes and Movement

For this project, it was also important to consider movement. The characters within the space who observe the viewer were given subtle, disjointed movement. Within horror cinema, a sense of unease and fear can be expressed through erratic movements or with slow and subtle changes. These movements deviate from what the viewer expects, building tension in the unexpected.

## 7) How can visual design be used to express elements of the LGBTQ experience through horror?

As introduced in the Precedents section, the visual novel, *We Know the Devil*, follows three queer characters who are haunted by “the devil,” who tempts them to embrace their dark and repressed feelings. The novel branches off into separate endings, one for each character as she gives into the devil and takes on a beautiful, gruesome and monstrous form.



Figure 28

Tatsuya Morino. 'The Call of Cthulhu.' *Kaibutsu Genso Gashu*. Kazesha. 1999.

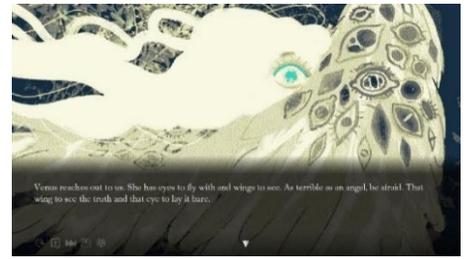


Figure 29 & 30

*We Know the Devil*. Date Nighto, Visual Novel, 2015.

The monster designs of *We Know the Devil* are influenced by Eldritch horror, a subset of horror design inspired by HP Lovecraft's work in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The designs in *We Know the Devil* give the character's monstrous forms a presence that feels unknowable, frightening, and beautiful while still instilling the viewer with a sense of danger. From a design standpoint, what creates this unnerving presence is how the form is abstracted. Their faces are shadowed, obscured or stained. The form spreads across the frame, giving the monster a sense of power over the space.

For *Other as Spectacle*, further ambiguity was necessary in order to project the user's reflection as a monstrous image. To create this, the user's image is captured with a depth camera, and then used to

disrupt the ballroom space. The user's reflection is made up of textures similar to outer space, with subtle movement added to the texture to add to the eerie energy of the figure. The form is distorted, leaving a trail of black shadows across the image when it moves.



Figure 31

While the structure of the design is less visually specific than the referenced examples of Eldritch horror, this form follows the same design theory. The user's reflection becomes an unknowable image, beautiful but disruptive of the world around it. It is a form for which the rules of the male gaze do not apply.

Other as Spectacle: Monstrous Reflection

### 8) Through animation and interactivity, how can an installation give the sense of "reacting" to the viewer?

Within *Other as Spectacle*, there are three active agents. The first is the viewer, who, when approaching the installation, takes on the role of a visitor and disrupter. They are a monster at the masquerade, and their presence is what the interactive character types respond to.

The interactive characters are split into two types, the visually male-coded "observer" and the female-coded "observed." When the user is several feet away from

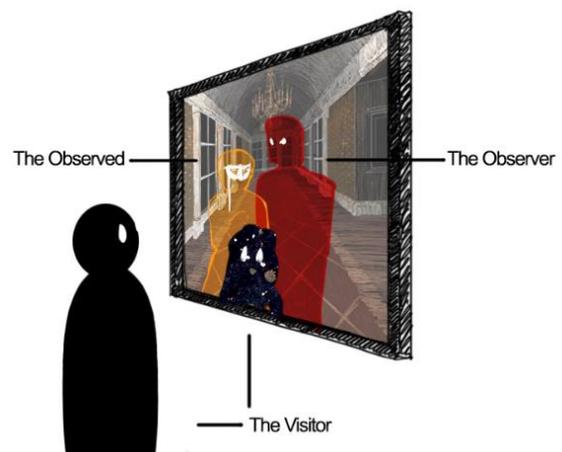


Figure 32

Other as Spectacle: Interactive Agents

the installation, the characters solely interact with each other. It is when the viewer approaches that their interactions shift. In their base state, the male-coded characters follow their position within the male gaze by “observing” the female-coded figures (Figure 33). However, once the user approaches the installation and their presence is recognized by the characters, the focus of the “observer” character changes to the viewer (Figure 34). The character expresses tension with their body language, their eyes tracking the user’s movements. They are both



Figure 33

Other as Spectacle:  
Male-Coded Observer,  
Stasis



Figure 34

Other as Spectacle:  
Male-Coded Observer,  
Threatened

threatened and attempting to threaten the user. They are in conflict with the user’s simple existence.

The female-coded “observed” character also begins with a base state when the user goes unnoticed (Figure 35), however, they branch off into three possible reactions. The first is *avoidance* (Figure 36). The character glances in the direction of the viewer, and then actively avoids eye contact, instead looking to the ground or looking away completely. This character knows their place within the male gaze and does not want to engage with the viewer, either out of fear of being “tainted” or fear of being punished for their interest.

The next mirrors the “observer” character in feeling *threatened* (Figure 37). This character embraces the male gaze and takes on the role of drawing the line between themselves and the viewer. To this character, the viewer’s presence is dangerous and unwelcome.

Finally, is the response of *empathy* (Figure 38). Within the installation, this engagement is rare and can typically only be seen after a significant amount of time is spent with the installation. This character finds a similarity between themselves and the viewer. After acknowledging the viewer's presence, they remove their mask to reveal elements of monstrosity that match the viewer's form. This character resembles the heroine of the horror genre, who recognizes herself in the monster. This character does not fit within the confines of the male gaze but hides themselves within the masquerade. Maybe they do it for protection, or maybe they do it because they do not yet understand their own monstrosity. The mask they wear restricts them more than it benefits them.



Figure 35

Other as Spectacle:  
Female-Coded Observer,  
Stasis



Figure 36

Other as Spectacle:  
Female-Coded Observer,  
Avoidance



Figure 37

Other as Spectacle:  
Female-Coded Observer,  
Threatened



Figure 38

Other as Spectacle:  
Female-Coded Observer,  
Empathy

## 9) What program can be used to build the desired interactions in the installation?

Touch Designer was used to build the interactive projection. Touch Designer is a visual programming tool, used for real-time projections and multi-media work. It contains settings that easily pull data from the Xbox Kinect, which can then be used to build interactivity that responds directly to movements of a

viewer. The interactivity for this project was built with the tools available through TouchDesigner in combination with Python code.

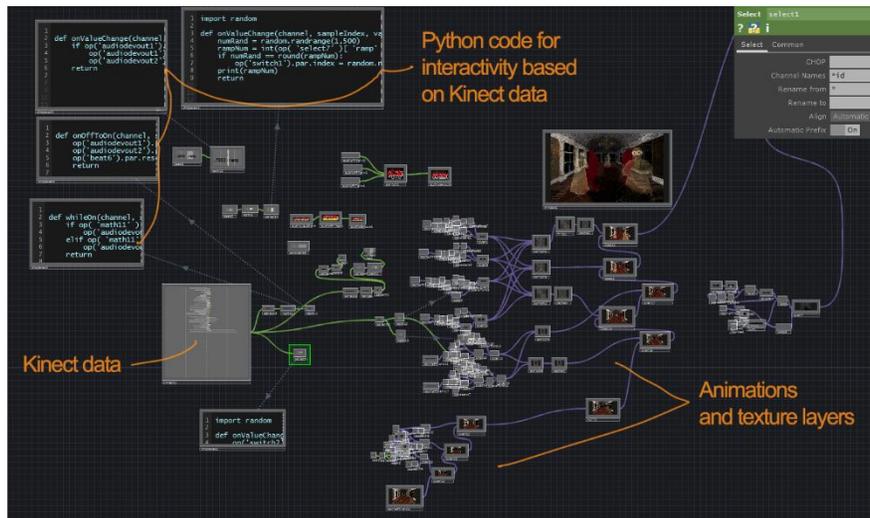


Figure 39

Other As Spectacle: Touch Designer screenshot

## 10) How can sound be used to enhance an interactive experience built on the male gaze and gothic horror?

For the sake of immersion, it was also important to consider sound in order to develop the presence of a ballroom. *The Grand Victorian Ballroom* is a collection of Victorian era music researched and conducted by Jeffrey Hunter. The music, combined with social chatter, movement and laughter has been used to create atmosphere through sound.

These sounds have also been set to change to augment the viewer's interactive experience. Before the viewer

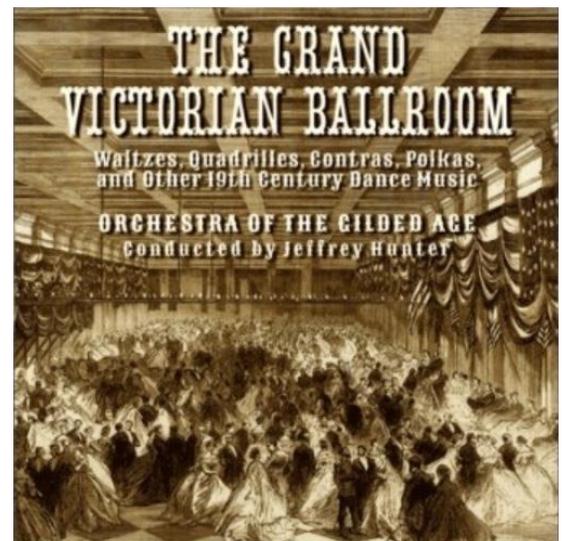


Figure 40

Hunter, Jeffrey. *The Grand Victorian Ballroom*, Gaslantern Records.

approaches the installation, the music remains low, inviting but distant. As the viewer approaches, the volume increases, inviting the viewer into the party.

However, the first time the viewer is recognized by the characters, the music comes to a halt. The user's presence is disruptive and unwelcome. The characters, still wary of the viewer's presence, only slowly get back into the rhythm of the ballroom as the music slowly returns.

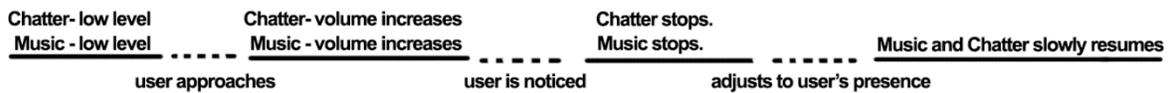


Figure 41

Other as Spectacle: Sound states

## Conclusion & Reflection

Over this design process, this project has aimed to resolve the question: *how can an installation be used to embody the harm experienced by women and queer individuals under the male gaze?*

In order to best determine how successfully this project has addressed this question, it will be imperative to test *Other as Spectacle* in an installation space. To prepare the project for installation, physical pieces will need to be completed, including a frame for the mirror and potential set pieces to help create further immersion (Figure 42.)

From this point in the project, further steps will be taken to develop the interactive elements of the installation.

Once this project is fully completed, it will be able to

function independently, running through a series of options based solely on user engagement. With

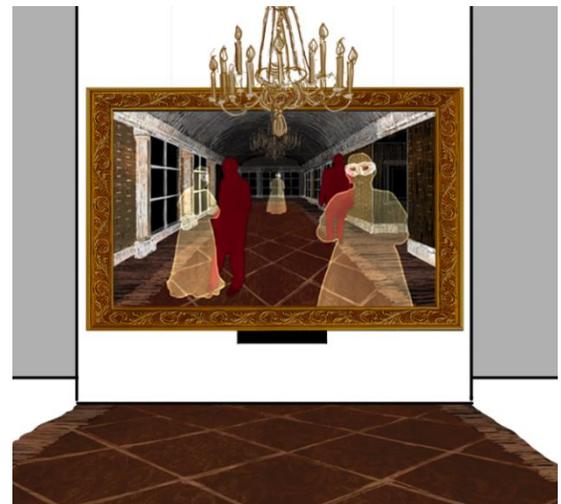


Figure 42

Other as Spectacle: Installation model

further character states and randomization, this project will allow for unique experiences, while also accounting for a viewer who might make multiple visits to the installation. To do this, it will be important to develop an extensive true state diagram, which will detail all possible interactivity and engagement.

Going forward, this project has considerable room for growth. Further character states and responses would allow for complex engagement and interpretation. The feedback from potential viewers could be a powerful tool in developing this project further. It will be important to consider what a viewer might take away from the installation with prior knowledge of the installation's goals, compared to interacting with it blind. In an installation space, it would be possible to monitor or request individual feedback. Since the power of gaze and the limitations within it extend well past gender and sexuality under the male gaze, it is possible that viewers may bring other aspects of their personal experiences to this installation. Engagement learned through this project could potentially lead to other design projects around gaze, with themes that focus on how gaze influences perspectives on class, race, culture, and ability. It is possible that these themes could be further explored in future iterations of this project or by starting a new project based on the framework established through this research.

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