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Critical Introduction: The Progression of the Male and Female Gaze Through Classical and Contemporary Literature

A topic that I have always been passionate about is the accurate portrayal of women within literature. There has for centuries been a lack of narrative voice from the female lens due to the patriarchal society that has dominated our culture. Women authors have lacked opportunities to write their truths in a way that did not receive utter disapproval from society. I began to observe a tendency within the male narrative, and even the female narrative, to objectify women and to devalue their emotions as well as their humanistic qualities. My curiosity grew and I did my research to discover a film theory by Laura Mulvey that coined the term the male gaze. I began to research more of this topic and found that the idea could be translated into more than just film but could be a lens for analyzing literature. Thus were the bones of my project. I wanted to explore how the male gaze was prevalent in literature as well as look at the harmful effects caused by this trope. Despite the abundance of evidence of literature that exemplified this idea, I wanted some hope at the end of the tunnel and this came in the form of the female gaze. My paper would become a focus on the male gaze as well as the female gaze and their progressions throughout classical and contemporary works. The decision was easy to land on at the end of the day because this topic has become so dear to my heart and the beauty and pride that I have found in the female gaze has pushed me to create a paper which accurately depicts the narrative story of the male and female gaze throughout literature.

I landed on the structure that my paper would focus on two classical pieces, one from the male gaze and one from the female gaze, as well as two contemporary works, one from the male

gaze and one from the female gaze. Through conversations and a lot of research, I decided to use Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre,* Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women,* Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita,* and Madeline Miller's *Circe.* Each of these novels have illustrated exactly what I was looking for through the research of my paper. With every section that I wrote I felt solidified in my decisions made to use these novels. My original idea of structure centered around the male gaze as the 'old way' and the harmful way and then progressing into the female gaze which was modern, new, and beautiful. Yet, this structure appeared confusing and not what I wanted to be exactly. Therefore, my final structural decision was to introduce the male and female gaze historically and then look at the two classical pieces as male and female gaze restrictive and then do the same for my contemporary pieces. I loved the flow of the paper once I decided on this structure because it showed the progression of the male gaze to the female gaze in the classical era and then had the same effect for the contemporary works. My argument would be revealed throughout this structure as proving how the male gaze has created a harmful portrayal of women through a literary lens while the female gaze has brought a sense of power and narrative voice to women.

Throughout my research I had several epiphanies and moments of awe. The most ground breaking discovery I found was a connection between Sigmund Freud's theory of scopophilia to the mele gaze. There was a moment where all the stars aligned in my mind and everything made sense as to why the male gaze existed and how it was relevant through psychological proof. This was the turning point in mty capstone where I knew for certain that I was creating something wonderful. There was a prevalence in literature that I had never had a name for and could now see it illustrated in everything that I read. I am currently taking Literature: Gender Diversity right now and every bit of literature I read depicts the harm of the male gaze and some explore the

idea of the female gaze and its prevalence. The articles I found through research helped continually solidify this idea of the patriarchy reflected in literature and how the male gaze and female gaze have been translated into literary voices. The most impactful novels I found for this project were *Lolita* and *Circe* because of their eloquent styles and perfect portrayal of the male and female gaze respectively. Nabokov illustrated the male gaze in a way that chilled me to my very core yet he did it in a way that was effective and beautifully written. Miller's writing was everything that women have dreamt of reading; their longings were being told through a woman's narrative. The contributions of the literary community inspired me to write about these moments in literature that have inspired me.

The most difficult aspect of my project was narrowing down the literary works to effectively communicate the points I wanted to make. There were times where I was writing about ideas that I could have taken in a million different directions yet I had to stay focused. The most rewarding part of my project was writing the final sentence. I felt utter joy and pride in everything that I had written. I felt that I had created something so wonderful and it would be a genuine contribution to the literary and academic communities. If I had another semester to work on this project then I would go back through and pick one specific aspect of the male and female gaze to explore in each of the literary works. I wish I had more pages to write and more time to write them but in the end I am extremely proud of everything that I have accomplished through my project.

Abstract:

Women in literature have been objectified and portrayed in a light that is advantageous to men. Often women are written as overtly sexual or as an object of male satisfaction. The male gaze creates a harmful perception of women in literature and promotes a limited and damaging view of women; however, the female gaze focuses on promoting women and giving them control over their place in society. While women are viewed as the object from the male gaze, the female gaze is a representation of the women as the subject. Literary works such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre,* Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women,* Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita,* and Madeline Miller's *Circe* are explored with the intent to discover the various ways that women have been portrayed throughout classical and contemporary pieces of literature from either a female gaze or a male gaze. This paper explores the male gaze from the classical piece of *Jane Eyre* and then is juxtaposed by the female gaze presented in *Little Women* both showing the different portrayals of agency and the role of gender expectations. The contemporary pieces illustrate the harmful effects of the male gaze through *Lolita* and then this limited view will be contrasted with the broadening of the female voice through *Circe.* With emphasis on Sigmund Freud's psychological theory of scopophilia, the focus of this paper is to contrast the limited perception of women through the male gaze to the promotion of women as the subject through the female gaze.

Literary Project:

The Progression of the Male and Female Gaze Through Classical and Contemporary Literature

The same longing of every human is to feel that they belong in this world. Literature is the preservation of generations, and it is the place where authors create a mirror that reflects society. F. Scott Fitzgerald said, “That is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings, that you’re not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong”. Perhaps literature reveals humanity’s commonality as each person searches for meaning and purpose within their own lives. However, literature has at times created the opposite effect with disillusioned perspectives. Literature has been from the point of view that is advantageous of male pleasure and written in a way that appeals to the ideals and the power structure of the patriarchy. Male fantasies describe her poised in a way that accentuates every curve of her body. She sat in a way that begged the eyes of men to stare upon her and marvel at every inch of her body. The women are not characters in literature but rather spectacles for the male pleasure with purpose found solely in whatever the men of society decide for them. Degraded and skewed, the image of women as an object has been prevalent in literature for centuries. Literary figures and women authors have attempted to change the narrative claiming “I am a woman, not an exhibit” (Frisby). However, the male gaze has turned women into a type of exhibit, one for the viewing pleasure of men. Continually, authors and the stereotypes surrounding women have devalued and dehumanized women to the point of complete loss for a purpose outside the male perspective of sexualization and objectification. Society, culture, and literary voices have created a trope of the perception of women from the straight male point of view called the male gaze. The male gaze is “a way of portraying and looking at women that empowers men while sexualizing and diminishing women” (Johnson). Women become an object of sexualization when placed within

the heterosexual male gaze. The reader is placed in the point of view of the male protagonist and, therefore, is forced to perceive the plot and characters the same way he does. Often this leads to the sexualization and objectification of women's bodies. The female gaze is a term used to juxtapose the male gaze in how the reader perceives women within a literary context from a woman's point of view or how literature appeals to a feminine audience. Illustrated throughout literature is the unique perspective a woman's point of view of other women has compared to how women are painted in literature by men. The female gaze breaks stereotypes and gender roles and gives subjectiveness to the women outside of the male relation and male gaze. The male and female gaze are emphasized through various theories, and it is perceived through literature that the male gaze creates a harmful perception of women and promotes a limited and damaging view of women; however, the female gaze focuses on promoting women and the breaking away from the patriarchal culture which has confined women to gender stereotypes and roles within the literature. Illustrated through the literary works of *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte and *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov, the male gaze is depicted. In contrast, the female gaze is explored in novels such as *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott and *Circe* by Madeline Miller.

Men's perception of women within the media displays an obvious over-sexualization and emphasis on women's bodies and beauty standards. Laura Mulvey's piece "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" was written in 1975 and introduced a new film theory about the male perception of women being present in film related to Sigmund Freud's idea of scopophilia (Garner). Scopophilia is a term mentioned in Freud's *Three Essays on Sexuality* which develops the reasoning and dangers of this form of sexual pleasure. Freud's interpretation forms two types of scopophilia; "taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze" and "curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with, likeness and

recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world" (Mulvey). Each perception of scopophilia looks at how sexualization and objectification of women can stem from the pleasure of 'looking.' While more evident in film theory because of the apparent framing of women's bodies and the relations of women characters often only being related to male characters; there is a less obvious but more gut-wrenching perception of women within literature. Descriptions and hidden meanings can delve into a more psychological and internal affliction concerning scopophilia or other forms of skewed love and attraction. A social construct of women being confined to their bodies and their pleasure for men seems most prevalent in film. Still, literature contains a more systematic and more profound psychological damage related to women's bodies.

Relating to Freud's concept of scopophilia, there is a point in a person's thoughts that these concepts can become skewed by human error and human nature. A sexual form of love can be skewed into an obsession or become a downfall to a person even though its intent focuses on the sensual love between two people, which is beautiful in creation and nature. Subjecting a person and confining them to an object of sexualization is a skewed form of perception and appreciation of a human being. Within the context of the male gaze, objectification and sexual subjectification of a woman's body is a form of scopophilia. Scopophilia relates to the Greek roots in terms of "Scopophilia can be derived from the Greek words skopeo, 'to see,' and philia, 'to love'" (Kieran 5). Simply put, the love for seeing is the foundational concept of Freud's psychological term. Perception has its flaws, and the prolonged gaze of a woman's body and a draw into over-sexualization create a harmful point of view. Sexualization's prevalence in literature may not be at first apparent, but it is a meaning hidden between the lines of novels and tucked away using secret words and symbols. Authors have illustrated portrayals of women

through the lens of a male and a female under the scope of varying perceptions and have thus created the male and female gaze in a literary sense for readers.

How can a skewed form of love and affection towards others create the foundation of the male gaze? When a society takes an idea and, with human nature and error, twists it to become a concept that was never a part of the original design, this can become a skewed perception. Freud highlights this within his theory of scopophilia which is illustrated in Pearse Kieran's essay that analyzes the Rat Man experiment claiming the man to be "a subject engaged in a virtual online and imaginary social bond" (Kieran). The Rat Man experiment gives insight into the neurotic, obsessive compulsions that can push a person into completely irrational and obsessive actions, exemplified in this experiment with a man addicted to pornography (Kieran). Minds are powerful tools that have long been neglected. Kieran's analysis gives light to the power of one's mind to create an obsession and imaginative affections that are being reciprocated. Applying this to the male gaze, the obsessive behaviors of the male gaze target women who have long been stripped of their voice and been neglected in ending the cruel and inaccurate ways of perceiving women. Men have become comfortable with this neurotic obsession which has turned the thought into a norm within society which is always translated to the public in literature. Tied to a culture that has constructed stereotypes and social norms that are damaging, women are confined and limited by the society men have always dominated.

The male gaze is rooted in the patriarchal society, which has long controlled women, and the masculine and feminine identities produced by this society sharply contrast one another. Feminine values are viewed in a dimmed light or sometimes never even noticed; however, masculine principles are seen as the way of life. Cynthia Griffin Wolff illustrates this devaluing of the feminine values and even tells of a husband who spoke of this matter of women seeking

validation and a voice, “maybe it’s not fair, but that’s how it is. Men are more important in society because they do, in fact, hold the principal roles which govern it. Wars are more important than female thoughts in a drawing-room” (Wolff). Not only are men devalued within this statement and stereotyped into the category of the brute male who fancies wars, but women’s subjectivity and thoughts are disregarded entirely from the narrative of life. Wolff further expresses this mirror which reflects stereotypes and the male imagination in how “literature reflects the prevalent social attitude toward women; and since this attitude so often values men and masculine pursuits over women and feminine hobbies, women’s concerns seem devalued” (Wolff). When looking at a novel that focuses on the portrayal of men and women, one can look at the language used and prevalence of men and women’s interests. Therefore, a society dominated by the stereotypical masculine pursuits oppresses the feminine ideals and even goes as far as to confine women within said stereotypical ideals yet continue to think poorly of them whether they follow these pursuits or follow pursuits of their choosing. Women in the male gaze are an object meant to follow the boxes so neatly created for them to stay in and never leave. Women in the female gaze are capable of thinking, feeling, and experiencing life to its fullest extent, whether within the social norms or outside of them. That is the juxtaposition between the male and female gaze; women in the male gaze are confined, yet women in the female gaze are capable of being free.

Classical pieces of literature often do not contain a perversion or sexualization of women’s bodies to the extent of more modern pieces but still emphasize the idea of women as objects of male satisfaction. The focus of classical pieces within the context of the male gaze highlights the oppressive patriarchal society which consumes women. Rachel Grate’s dissertation entitled “Love at First Sight? Jane Austen and the Transformative Male Gaze” points out that

"the power of a perceptive female gaze is perhaps best understood in the context of Austen's time period, during which women were even more explicitly limited as objects. While the male gaze is a modern theoretical framework, theories about the significance and character of beauty were already prevalent in Austen's time" (Grate). Jane Austen was a female author similar to Charlotte Bronte in that they each were women writing narratives about women stuck in the patriarchal society. Victorian pieces of literature often expressed various forms of the male gaze under the concepts of male domination and control over the thoughts and agency of women. Women authors were not allowed to be bold in their writings to make strong claims against patriarchal norms. Instead, they used their writing to illustrate the duality of women to hold femininity and subjectivity and depict how the male gaze showed as harmful. Men had a taste for power and a possessive way of treating the women within their lives, which takes the form of the male gaze into the objectification of women. An example of classical literature highlighting the Victorian era-styled male gaze is Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre.* This is an exquisite novel that explores hints of feminist ideals within the emotions of the main character Jane and how the male gaze continually stifles her. A timeless classic, *Jane Eyre* includes women as main characters who experience hints of agency but could be perceived as male-influenced and patriarchally inclined decisions. Although the male gaze does not drive the author, she illustrates how the male gaze influenced society. Despite Jane being the narrator, the reader is still perceiving a world dominated by the male gaze and its influence in the life of Jane. The story follows Jane Eyre in her pursuit of creating a life of her own, separated into three main times of her life: Lowood School, Thornfield Hall, and Moor House.

Jane's childhood years at Lowood school and her childhood home were the foundation for her perceptions of the woman that society was calling her to be. These years were filled with

emotional trauma, which forced her to fulfill her role as the “ideal Victorian woman” (Leonard 14). Emotional outbursts tended to devalue women in the eyes of the male-dominated culture. Anger and signs of sadness seemed to take away any sense of dignity in a woman, which left Jane at a disadvantage. The most prominent male figure in her life who took away her sense of agency was Mr. Brocklehurst, the supervisor of Lowood School. Vicious and cruel, Mr. Brocklehurst desires to control the girls who are residents of Lowood, and he does so through the weaponization of religion. Language is a powerful weapon used to strike fear into the hearts of women, and Mr. Brocklehurst’s character illustrates this, claiming, “My mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh” (Bronte). Mortify functions as a verb in this sense as Brocklehurst is attempting to instill a fear into their minds that deters them from thinking on their own or following their desires. The male gaze, in this sense, is demonstrating possession and the male’s belief that they are deserving of control over women. This superiority complex is emphasized in the actions of Brocklehurst as he continually treats the girls as his property and dehumanizes them through cruel punishment, “Punish her body to save her soul” (Bronte). Jane, attempting to distract a teacher from physically beating a classmate, dropped her chalkboard and was then the victim of a cruel punishment invoked by Brocklehurst. Subject to the controlling and domineering persona of one of the sole male figures in her life, Jane experiences little exposure beyond these characters that appear consistent with the men in her life. Bronte presents in the early years of Jane’s life the male gaze, which fantasizes a power dynamic that men have over women, and paints women in a submissive perspective.

Transitioning into her young adult years, Jane experiences her lack of agency and control over her life. The role of men taking control over women’s thoughts and actions is portrayed in this way. Women are now reduced to an object for men to control as if they are puppeteers.

Although limited in her opportunities in life, Jane is able to use her education to create a life of her own in a sense. Ultimately, Jane finds herself becoming the governess to the young Adele. Jane spends a good portion of the novel working in the house of Edward Rochester as Adele is his ward. Thornfield Hall is the setting for the growing relationship between Rochester and Jane, which helps develop the main struggles between Jane and her desire for agency. *Readers often romanticize Jane Eyre* as it is perceived as this great romantic love story between Rochester and Jane. Yet, the reader understands the complexity of the relationship between Jane and Rochester to be something other than passionate love and instead love out of fantasizing over the idea placed in her mind. Rochester manipulates the emotional fragility of Jane throughout the novel as he recognizes the effect his looks, status, and age have on the 18-year-old girl who has been starved of love throughout her youth (Blakemore). Within the context of this time of Jane's life, the male gaze is most prevalent in how Jane's captivation with Rochester appears to stem from a patriarchal love fantasy in which the girl marries a man who seems to be outside of the cruelty and forceful marriages. However, Jane's attraction to Rochester can be perceived as circumstantial. The male gaze is exemplified in a way that disregards the original feelings expressed by Jane as a sacrifice for her new affair with Rochester. However, Rochester presents a dominating persona illustrated through a conversation about Jane's artwork in which Rochester accuses her of being aided by a master and the work not entirely being hers. Christine Sweeney comments on this interaction, saying, "Rochester has assumed that the paintings, which are products of Jane's visual and mental perception—products of her gaze—are not hers alone" (Sweeney). Jane is refined to the male gaze by Rochester's domineering and devaluing perspective placed on her.

Furthermore, Jane's time at Thornfield reveals the emphasis on physical appearance and the importance that the patriarchal society created for women's beauty standards. Often described as "poor, obscure, plain and little," Jane's physical features are frequently commented on, especially in reference to Blanche Ingram, a fellow contender for Rochester's affection (citation). Comparing herself to Blanche, Jane often looks to features which she believes men find attractive in women. Bronte uses language that emphasizes Blanche's physical attributes, which appeal to the stereotypical male gaze of attraction. An entire paragraph consumes the reader with a detailed telling of her appearance without a single reference to the insights of her mind or the idea that she is more than an object of the male view. Mrs. Fairfax and Jane discuss Blanch through a lens that highlights features of women that men are believed to be delighted by. The perception that Mrs. Fairfax has of Blanch is focused on her physical attributes and her sole accomplishment, which all derive from concepts within the male gaze in beauty standards. Mrs. Fairfax describes Blanch as:

> Tall, fine bust, sloping shoulders; long, graceful neck: olive complexion, dark and clear; noble features; eyes rather like Mr. Rochester's: large and black, and as brilliant as her jewels. And then she had such a fine head of hair; ravenblack and so becomingly arranged: a crown of thick plaits behind, and in front the longest, the glossiest curls I ever saw. She was dressed in pure white; an amber-coloured scarf was passed over her shoulder and across her breast, tied at the side, and descending in long, fringed ends below her knee. She wore an amber-coloured flower, too, in her hair: it contrasted well with the jetty mass of her curls. (Bronte 241)

Her sole accomplishment is written in the lines to follow, as she is described to have an incredible singing voice. However, Mrs. Fairfax admits that she is no music critic. Therefore, the

reasoning behind her commentary about Blanch derives from a comment that Mr. Rochester made, “and I heard him say her execution was remarkably good” (Bronte 242). Influenced by the male standard of beauty and accomplishment, the women are consumed by the belief that what the men say is accurate and finite. Brilliantly woven throughout the novel is the effect that the male gaze has over the perceptions women hold upon one another. Blanche is perceived through the lens of the male gaze as it affects the perceptions that other women hold upon what men desire in appearance. In this way, the reader is exposed to a more intricate form of the male gaze as it seeps into women's minds and forces them to wear this objectifying lens towards other women.

Appearance and status were the main concerns for any person of marital age within the 1800s. For Jane, her extreme lack of agency stemmed from her lack of appearance and status. After leaving Rochester behind in an attempt to discover more of herself, Jane stumbled upon a small town where she resided for most of the remainder of the novel. Moor House was a time of mystical experiences and a moment in which Jane was exposed to the harsh realities of the male-dominated world that entrapped her. Marriage was just one way the male-dominated society took control over women’s agency and further marginalized her. Jane did not have parents who would set her up with a ‘perfect match,’ which left her to her own devices to find a suitor who would care for her. St. John Rivers is Jane’s cousin who attempts to fill this place of male influence as he suggests or aggressively persuades Jane that her God-given purpose in life is to marry him. The male gaze, in this sense, is another form of the dominating male persona which attempts to control women, but St. John does so by using God and religion as a weapon to influence his desires upon Jane. St. John claims, “God and nature intended you for a missionary’s wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labour,

not love. A missionary's wife you must – shall be. You shall be mine: I claim you – not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service" (Bronte). The interesting contrast noted is the use of the wording "not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service" because one may assume this directly contradicts the notion of the male gaze which is that decisions are made for the male pleasure. However, one may argue that this is St. John's attempt to manipulate Jane to believe that his desires in life are just the desires of God. Natalie Edberg's paper entitled "Passion and Feeling versus Religion and 'Pure' Affection in Jane Eyre" explores a different perspective on this religious marriage encounter between Jane and St. John, claiming it to be more about the moment in which Jane must choose between a spiritual form of love known as chaste love and passionate love which is deemed sinful (Edberg). Jane appears afraid of this chaste love as she says, "always restrained, always checked, forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame consumed… this would be unendurable" (Brontë 363). The sexual desires of Jane, and all women, have been neglected and completely disregarded throughout history. Within Edberg's paper, she discusses the notion by Sandra Gilbert that this idea of religious manipulation can be looked at with a new depth as an 'erotic theme' where "what Jane discovers through this climax of impassioned epiphany is that the paradise for which she longs is not St. John's heaven of spiritual transcendence but rather an earthly paradise of physical fulfillment" (Edberg 9). Sexual passion and desire were reserved for men alone. This trope had not often been explored throughout literature which is evident in the depth that one must go to in order to understand this hidden meaning of Jane's disapproval towards the chaste Christian love. Women as beings who experience sexual passion and desire are not part of the male gaze, as this illustrates the skewed perception placed on women. Reserved to be pure and outside of something meant to be for the

male pleasure alone, sexuality is another layer of the male and female gaze that Bronte explores in a surface-level way. St. John and Jane's relationship is Bronte's way of further exploring the effects of domineering male personas and the role of religious manipulation and repressed sexuality of women from the male gaze. Jane is a character who transcends time, and her story illustrates a society that is still controlled by the patriarchy yet is able to explore the effects of the male gaze through a lens that gives light to the perceptions of men during the time through the point of view of a woman. This unique perspective allows readers to see the male gaze's effects on women by way of treatment from the men towards women, the manipulative use of power and social status, and the use of religion within the domineering personas of men. The world surrounding them was for male pleasure, and female desire was disregarded entirely. Unique and beautiful, *Jane Eyre* gives readers a look into the Victorian era of literature, which was still consumed by the male perception of the world.

Agency in a woman's life within the Victorian Era was a central theme explored in literary works. Men controlled women, and their lives were not often full of choice and freedom to follow their desires. However, women were still able to find ways to seek out their paths in life and find agency. Female agency is "an account of their capacity for individualized choice and action" (Meyers). The conflict arises when women are meant to decide whether their desires are enough to find agency or find solace in conforming to societal norms of the patriarchy. Marriage standards, elegance in interactions, and the expectations of women all contributed to how women ultimately perceived their own lives. In contrast to the male gaze, the female gaze is presented as how women perceive themselves within literary work. The woman is viewed as the subject of the story and is "the ways in which women and girls look at other females, at males, and at things in the world. This concerns the kinds of looking involved, and how these may be

related to identification, objectification, subjectivity, and the performance and construction of gender" ("female gaze"). Classical works explore the female agency, but there is a unique portrayal of gender stereotypes or the breaking away of gender stereotypes that exemplify the female gaze. The female gaze illustrates the idea of the woman as more than an object of male perversion but a subject who is able to explore their own lives outside of the male authority.

Women did not often experience this sense of agency within their lives as it was all planned and created without a second thought to their feelings or emotions. Marriage and the desire of women's hearts were not of choice in pursuit but were controlled by a father figure or a husband. The role of society over women was often oppressive and harsh. However, Louisa May Alcott explores the role of agency and the possibility for women's freedom through the lens of the March sisters in *Little Women*. Each sister experiences a different aspect of life and the opportunities that women are able to have within a male-dominated world. Alcott's novel "transcends many of the gender stereotypes ideals of the nineteenth century," and she "challenged society's definition of stereotypical gender roles and pushed the boundaries of expectations that were placed on both men and women to conform to society's standards" (Bender). Furthermore, Alcott writes in an appeal to the female gaze as she writes to show a mirror that reflects the hearts of women and not what men believe to be the hearts of women. Alcott challenges the male gaze by creating characters who break gender stereotypes set by the patriarchy and focus on female characters who experience agency in their own lives. Women are not allowed subjectiveness and desire outside of the male gaze, yet Alcott breaks this and creates a piece that explores this world that has been hidden in women's minds.

Jo March and Theodore Laurence (Laurie) are two of the novel's main characters that break away from gender stereotypes and present the reader with this new perception of women. Clare

Bender points out in her findings the symbolic nature of the names Jo, who is a female character with a stereotypical male name, and Laurie, who is a male with a stereotypical female name (Bender). Alcott illustrates the ability of the reader to perceive characters outside of stereotypes and how they can still possess unique and appropriate qualities. Jo is given masculine attributes while Laurie exudes more feminine attributes, thus forming a new perception of gender roles for the characters (Bender). Beyond obtaining these characteristics, Alcott exemplifies the female gaze by how Jo, Laurie, and the March sisters illustrate comfortability and ownership of these qualities. The women in the novel are not objects who are to be married off, but they are women who have passions in life and emotions that drive their desire to find love and have families. The female characters no longer experience unknowable emotions or tenderness for a person, which appears to be a surface-level child's love. Alcott bestows lives for the women who paint them each as a narrative subject. Their stories go beyond stereotypes and the woman's search for marriage evident in classical literature.

The female gaze is illustrated predominantly through the lens of Jo March as she goes through a transformation throughout the narrative in *Little Women*. Jo experiences several encounters with the harmful effects of the patriarchal society in which she was being raised, yet she was in many ways able to rise above it to be a version of herself whom she desired to become. Headstrong, persistent, and honest with her opinions, Jo is a woman who is unafraid to share her thoughts on the patriarchal society, which is constantly confining her to stereotypes and placing unrealistic expectations upon her and her sisters (Bender). The March family does not have a lot of money, and while their father is serving in the military, the daughters are left alone with their mother to take care of them. However, the girls attempt to live seemingly ordinary lives and find joy in the little things. Meg, the eldest, desires to go to parties and dress in fancy

clothes, while Jo, the second eldest, does not admire these ideals. Similar to the expectations found in *Jane Eyre,* Jo and Meg feel the pressure of what their appearance is meant to be when they are out. The two eldest are invited to a party to which Alcott describes their attire as Meg's shoes being uncomfortable and Jo's hairpins hurting her head as well as the emphasis placed on the singular soiled pair of gloves which the girls end up sharing a new pair with one nice glove for each and one soiled glove to hold (Bender). Alcott alludes to the role that appearance continues to play in their lives but what is so brilliant about her writing is how she devalues this emphasis on appearance and creates an idea that places the value from the woman's perspective and not one that feels necessary from a male perspective. Jo's life continues to be all about rejecting these ideas of marriage and appearance, which have been pushed upon her and her sisters. Her dreams are to be a writer and to live a life which people are astonished by, "I want to do something splendid...something heroic or wonderful that won't be forgotten after I'm dead. I don't know what, but I'm on the watch for it and I mean to astonish you all someday" (Alcott chapter). Juxtaposed to the life of Jane in *Jane Eyre*, from the female gaze, the reader observes that women have aspirations in life that go beyond family and marriage. The desire of Jo's heart is to be remembered and to do something so wonderful that people are awed by her. A longing denied by women throughout literature is the depth that they are more than wives and mothers, but they are people with dreams and hopes and complex thoughts and emotions. The female gaze illustrated through Jo exemplifies the depth of being the subject within the narrative and experiencing life outside of the restrictive male gaze. Jo is complex, full of aspirations, yet she still holds feminine qualities that make her unique and wonderful. Throughout the novel, readers may wish that Jo and Laurie end up together because of their relationship throughout the story. Instead, Jo ends up with Professor Baer, a German professor, who sees past Jo as beautiful and

perceives her as who she is to herself. Professor Baer embraces the female gaze, which Jo has illuminated herself through, and she is more than a woman to marry, but her work and her personality are admired by Baer (Keenan). Although Jo is against the concept of marriage throughout the entirety of the novel, the sincerity which comes with her love for Baer stems from the idea that Jo never believed she would be loved as a person and for who she is but instead she once believed that she would only ever be perceived as a woman to marry. Baer saw Jo as a person with depth and passion for her writing, he took her seriously, and this to Jo is what she longed for. The female gaze breaks the bonds of the male gaze, which restricts women, and Alcott has written the character of Jo to do precisely that; Jo breaks the stereotypes, and she transcends into a life which she is proud of and allows for her to be the subject of her narrative without the domineering male persona.

Emotions are a feminine quality that is often reserved for women alone. However, being overly emotional is viewed poorly within this Victorian society. Although women are often written as emotional beings through the male gaze, it is evident that men and society continually look down upon women who show strong emotions. Marmee, the mother of the March sisters, is Alcott's illustration of a woman able to express emotions in a way where she is not looked down upon for expressing them. With a husband away at war and four daughters each experiencing life in all the good and evil, Marmee claims, "I've been angry almost every day of my life," as she is frustrated with the circumstances of life at times (Alcott). Contrary to the rejection of such strong emotions in *Jane Eyre,* Marmee and the other sisters experience justified strong emotions that are considered to be accurate of their circumstances of life. Jo experiences intense outbursts of emotions from her lack of chances in a male-dominated world, claiming, "Women, they have minds, and they have souls, as well as just hearts. And they've got ambition, and they've got

talent, as well as just beauty. I'm so sick of people saying that love is all a woman is fit for" (Alcott). Alcott's words perfectly encapsulate the female gaze at its heart and the emotions that drive women to perceive themselves outside of gender stereotypes, outside of being the wife and mother, and outside what the male gaze has confined them to be. Within the novel *Little Women,* Alcott illustrates the female gaze by showing women as the story's subjects beyond being objectified or confined from the male perspective. Instead, these women rise above the society they are stuck in and invoke a female narrative that accurately depicts the hearts and souls of women. The female gaze within the context of Alcott's *Little Women* defines the Victorian era combat against the male gaze and the attempts of women to create a narrative of their own which tells the stories of their lives and perceives women in a new and endearing light that will continue to affect readers and authors for the centuries to follow.

Sexualization and objectification of women's bodies have become a more prevalent topic of conversation within more contemporary pieces of literature. An emphasis on the bodies of women and the supposed 'role' that women play in the lives of men has created a trope within literature that is harmful to the perception of women as humans. While the male gaze has always been a prevalent aspect of literature, there has become a more prevalent form of objectifying women through text. Society emphasizes topics of sex and the stereotypical body forms that a woman is meant to fit into. Prevalent within society, literature illustrates the current culture of the present day. Therefore, contemporary works have emphasized the physical and concentrated on the effects of this over-sexualization. In terms of skewed perceptions of scopophilia, works have articulated the male gaze in various forms, which consider sexualization the main subject. Stemming from the male gaze is the beauty standard that focuses on borderline childlike characters of women considered to be sensual. The pedophilic disorder is "characterized by

recurring, intense sexually arousing fantasies, urges, or behavior involving children (usually 13 years old or younger)" (Brown). The power imbalance between Lolita and Humbert goes beyond just age but represents the gender imbalance between men and women. Patricia E. Johnson writes about this power dynamic within the male gaze as being "connected to power and surveillance: the person who gazes is empowered over the person who is the object of the gaze," (Johnson 39). Lolita's unique and disturbing quality is that the reader is confined to a singular first-person narration by the perverted Humbert. Therefore, the reader has little chance to escape this perspective which is another way to demonstrate the constricted male gaze upon readers.

Subsided with eloquent language and a captivating story, Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* illustrates the obsessive and dominating tendencies that can arise from the pleasure of gazing upon women and the mindset that women are an object. Instead, the focus of this piece can use the term 'girl' instead of woman as the object of its' main protagonist's gaze is Lolita, the 12-year-old child. Humbert Humbert is an English teacher in his 40's who has written his memoir in which he reflects on his obsession with Lolita. Nabokov perfectly illustrates Freud's concept of scopophilia in a way that also emphasizes the harm of sexualization and a dominating male presence in a girl's life. Freud's concept of scopophilia is brought back into the narrative with pedophilia as a form of sexual desire deriving from the pleasure of perception. Further exemplified is the power imbalance that Humbert seeks throughout his narrative, even referencing back to his first love Annabel, "When I was a child and she was a child, my little Annabel was no nymphet to me; I was her equal" (Nabokov 17). Humbert's pervasive commentary on the object of his male fantasy, his 'nymphet,' is explored throughout Lolita. As described in Freud's theory, "it can become fixated into a perversion, producing obsessive voyeurs and Peeping Toms, whose only sexual satisfaction can come from watching, in an active

controlling sense, an objectified other." (Sigmund Freud- Mulvey). Lolita is the objectified other, the 'nymphet' in Humbert's eyes, which Freud illustrates in his definition of the results of scopophilia taking precedence in a man's mind. Throughout the novel, the reader is exposed to the power and influence that the male gaze has over a woman and how this over-sexualization of women to the point of being treated as less than human is destructive.

Humbert's obsession is an extreme example of the male gaze and scopophilia displayed in a significant way, yet readers are still exposed to scopophilia through his direct narrative. Yet Humbert confines Lolita to the sexual object, which illustrates the epitome of the male gaze. Through verbal and nonverbal cues within the narrative, the reader observes Lolita's direct objectification and dehumanization from Humbert's male gaze. An article by Sarah Vanbuskirk describes the perversion of the male gaze, "from early adolescence on, we are driven to look at and evaluate each other as potential mates, the male gaze twists this natural urge, turning the women into passive items to possess and use as props" (Vanbuskirk). Sexual language is used throughout Humbert's narrative as he describes girls to the reader in his obsessive way, "She came hardly up to my chest hair and had the kind of dimpled round little face French girls so often have, and I liked her long lashes and tight-fitting dress sheathing in pearl-gray her young body which still retained - and that was the nymph echo, the chill of delight, the leap in my loins" (Nabokov 21). From this lens, it is evident that the girl mentioned is simply an object of Humbert's pleasure to look upon and nothing more. Lolita is not only an object of his gaze, but Humbert shows a possessive nature over her calling her "this Lolita, my Lolita" and referring to her as 'pet names' several times throughout the novel and always including 'my' before each (Nabokov 45). Lolita's pureness and innocence are sharply contrasted by Humbert's graphic perceptions of her in his mind and the fantasy he holds Lolita in. Several early encounters

between the characters show an unawareness of the physical attraction that Humbert has towards Lolita as she came into his room while he worked one day, “my innocent little visitor slowly sank to a half-sitting position upon my knee. Her adorable profile, parted lips, warm hair were some three inches from my bared eyetooth; and I felt the heat of her limbs through her rough tomboy clothes” (Nabokov 48). Amplified in his mind, Humbert’s fascination with Lolita and the language he uses further illustrates his over-sexualization of innocent actions by the young Lolita. While Lolita is simply acting as a child and playing around with Humbert, his perceptions of the interaction become overtly sexual in the description “Her legs twitched a little as they lay across my live lap; I stroked them” as well as his interpretation of the moment being “I was in a state of excitement bordering on insanity” (Nabokov 58-59). Nabokov’s intricate telling of Humbert’s fantasy world exposes the overtly sexualized and objectified perceptions from this male gaze reflected on Lolita. Her innocence and purity contrast the complete over-sexualization that Humbert places upon her.

Humbert’s pervasive perceptions of Lolita and the obsessive sexualization of her ultimately lead to her life of misery and eventually her death which further exemplifies the utter harm that can result from the male gaze towards women. Foreshadowed in an early place in the novel is Humbert’s notion that because she was unaware of his attempts at slight touches and the fantasy world that lived in his mind, then everything was okay, “I felt proud of myself. I had stolen the honey of a spasm without impairing the morals of a minor. Absolutely no harm done” as well as “The child knew nothing. I had done nothing to her” (Nabokov 62). Lolita’s innocence is used as a weapon, and Humbert takes advantage of her in ways that result in continued justification for his objectification of Lolita. After Mrs. Haze discovered the obsessive journal entries Humbert wrote about Lolita; she tore into him with rage. The result of the argument

ended in the incident where Mrs. Haze was hit by a car and killed on impact; this moment was a turning point for the narrative of Humbert and his Lolita. Humbert picks Lolita up from her summer camp, and during this drive away to a new destination occurs a conversation which shows evidence of the harm from Humbert and his taking advantage of Lolita's innocence as she claims, "Well, you haven't kissed me yet, have you?" which comes after Humbert questioning why Lolita believes he does not care for her anymore (Nabokov 112). Lolita's perceptions of her relationship with Humbert have become centered around Humbert's physicality. The influence of Humbert's perceptions of Lolita has been reflected in how she perceives their relationship. A disturbing scene occurs on the trip taken by Humbert and Lolita, where in a hotel room one night, he slips Lolita a sleeping drug. During the night, throughout several detailed pages of allusive language, Humbert explores the body of Lolita but claims "by six she was wide awake, and by six fifteen we were technically lovers. I am going to tell you something very strange: it was she who seduced me" (Nabokov 132). The circumstances of Lolita's life and the over-exposure to sexuality, as well as the stealing of her innocence from Humbert, led her to a life which left her "absolutely nowhere else to go" (Nabokov 142). Lolita was trapped within this world that Humbert exposed her to, which eventually led to her pregnancy at 17 years old and her death while giving birth to her child. *Lolita* is a captivating and disturbing novel that explores the male gaze, reflecting the harm from overt sexualization and the dehumanization of objectification.

Contemporary literature has proven that strong female characters can produce beautiful and powerful stories with the woman as the subject rather than an object of male pleasure. A notion that may be assumed with the female gaze presented in literature would be that the author will completely exclude any hint of the male gaze and its effects. However, the female gaze is

prevalent and emphasized compared to the world that women experience outside of their own gaze. Therefore, authors use the male gaze to highlight its effects through a woman's perspective while also being able to illustrate the female point of view through the female gaze. Women are often sexualized in the present era of literature and film and virtually every other facet of mainstream media. Sarah Vanburisik mentions this effect of the male gaze upon women saying, "The pressure to conform to this patriarchal view (or to simply accept or humor it) and endure being seen in this way shapes how women think about their own bodies, capabilities, and place in the world—and that of other women" (Vanbuskirk). Translated into the female gaze, when looked at outside the male gaze, women can perceive themselves and other women in a higher light. When the author is able to develop a woman character who experiences all of the qualities that have been so desperately longed after, the reader can perceive this character as the subject of the work rather than an object of male satisfaction. Although women cannot escape the male-dominated culture that exposes women to the power of the male gaze, they are still able to begin perceiving themselves as more than what they have been confined to. Women in contemporary literature have been able to combat the male gaze to empower women and give a voice to a group that has long been silenced.

Female authors in modern times have had the opportunity to voice the harmful effects of the male gaze by producing works that explore the female gaze. Stories always have more perspectives than the narrator, and women's voices tend to be lost in the literary canon. Contemporary works have created a space for retelling stories to allow authors to tell new narratives from the same old stories. Chelsea Leu gives light to this power in how "Storytelling is a tool: from rewriting history books to having your press secretaries lie for you, shaping a narrative to suit your own ends is one of the most powerful cudgels an aspiring despot can

wield" (Leu). Madeline Miller's *Circe* dives into a minor Greek female literary character focusing on the power that can come from feelings of loneliness and search for love and her struggle living in a male-dominated world. Miller writes from a female perspective, and the reader is forced into seeing the ancient Greek world through a new lens. This piece of literature exposes how the literature of Ancient Greece, like many other eras, was written to appeal to the male gaze. However, Miller illustrates broken gender roles and steers clear of stereotypes to show the female gaze in a way that appeals to the female readers. Circe, Athena, Madea, and many other famous Greek women appear in the story. The novel's unique quality is how Miller connects each of these women outside of male relationships. The women have conversations of power, destiny, and love without the input of men. Miller uses masculine qualities and redefines them into the powerful and aesthetic beauty which defines the female characters. Her story defies the male-dominated narrative of *The Odyssey* and takes on the perspective of a woman fighting against the norms (Leu). Circe is a passionate character who defies the constraints of a male-dominated world and rises above to create for herself a life where she is the subject and leads her own path.

The duality of Circe is present in her both feminine and masculine traits, which characterize the female gaze in its breaking of gender stereotypes. Bold and passionate, Circe finds herself holding power over men within the male-dominated world and exposes their thirst for dominant power over her "I would come to know this type of man, jealous of his little power, to whom I was only a woman" (Miller). Let down and disappointed by the men in her life, Circe had to find a way out of the constraints. Circe's experiences in life often led her to the harsh realizations that the male-dominated world she was a part of would not willingly give her the desires of her heart or perceive her the way she wanted to be. Women were not allowed power

and indeed not power over men. Throughout her life, she was doubted, and she was constrained to a singular idea of herself that society placed upon her, yet she claims, “It is a common saying that women are delicate creatures, flowers, eggs, anything that may be crushed in a moment’s carelessness. If I had ever believed it, I no longer did” (Miller). The transformation Circe experiences is the power she finds within herself despite the constant voices which screamed louder than her own that she could not accomplish it all. Miller illustrates the female gaze from Circe’s growth as she learns to perceive herself through her own lens and become the person she desires and not the person she is forced to be by society. Breaking free of the chains she is confined to, Circe discovers the qualities within herself that people have often claimed not to exist. A common symbol of women in literature is the caged bird, as it tells how women are delicate beings who have been trapped. Circe rises above this symbolic form claiming, “I will not be like a bird bred in a cage, I thought, too dull to fly even when the door stands open” (Miller). Finding her role within several Greek mythological stories and tales, Circe develops into a woman of great power and confidence despite being trapped in exile on an island. Circe becomes a mother to Telegonus, which Miller artistically writes to show her femininity and still holding to the exact characteristics of power and wit that aided in developing her character. The transformation of Circe breaking free of the constraints of the Greek patriarchal society is a way to show the female gaze from the perception of rising above the voices which attempt to drown her. Circe is no longer a background character of Greek mythology, but she is the narrative and the voice of truth as she is able to tell her own story through her perceptions. Miller’s unique retelling of Greek mythology gives power to the female gaze by illustrating the beauty, power, and freedom that stems from the female narrative. The longings of the female heart are pieced together in Circe’s narrative, and her ability to rise above the male gaze to create for herself a

story with her own perceptions is the purpose that the female gaze serves in the stories of women.

From the beginning of time, the male voice has been the dominating force in society, reflected in literature. Female authors have attempted throughout centuries to change the narrative and have their voices rise above to create a perception of life that is accurate to women's narratives through the female gaze. The male gaze has promoted a harmful effect on the perception of women as sexualized objects for male pleasure as well as disregarding the beauty that stems from both stereotypical feminine and masculine qualities present in women. Freud's theory of scopophilia gives insight into this love for looking and how the male gaze promotes this objectification of women and harmfully places expectations and gender roles without consideration for the narrative women wish to tell. *Jane Eyre* and *Lolita* illustrate the harm of the male gaze and the direct objectification caused by the patriarchal standards set by society. Juxtaposed to the male gaze is the beauty in the female narrative through the expression of breaking gender roles and stereotypes and promoting the woman as the subject of the story rather than the object. The female gaze embodies the strides women have taken to conquer the society which has drowned out their narratives and diminished their stories. *Little Women* and *Circe* illustrate the progression that the female gaze has taken from hints of breaking stereotypes to the power that can be found from retelling an ancient story from a woman's perspective. Human beings have always longed to perceive themselves in an accurate light in the products of society. Literature has the beautiful and unique ability to solidify the longings of the hearts of generations of people. We discover our longings are universal; if only our hopes are illustrated through the perfect lens for our narratives.

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Edberg, Natalie. "Passion and Feeling versus Religion and 'Pure' Affection in Jane Eyre." Karlstads University, 2 Oct. 2021, www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1528856/FULLTEXT01.pdf. Accessed 4 Dec. 2021. Working paper.

The paper written is a focus on the different loves shown through Jane Eyre such as the chaste Christian love and the sinful passionate love. The predominant purpose of this idea towards my paper is that it justifies the idea that Jane was a sexual being beyond the male gaze and that her longings were not being fully met because of her restrictive society. This helps to further support the idea that St. John restricts Jane through manipulation and religious weaponry.

Grate, Rachel S. *Love at First Sight? Jane Austen and the Transformative Male Gaze*. Scripps College, MA thesis. core.ac.uk/download/pdf/70982297.pdf.

This thesis talks about something very important to my paper which is the the purpose of the male gaze being transformative for the female character. I want to use this paper as an informative source to further support this topic of how a woman can be transformed by the male gaze as well as how the male gaze has been presented in Victorian works. I will use various excerpts that focus on the topics of my paper from this thesis but will not use a majority of it.

Johnson, Patricia E. "The Gendered Politics of the Gaze: Henry James and George Eliot." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, vol. 30, no. 1, Mar. 1997, pp. 39-54. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44029557?read-now=1&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents. Accessed 5 Dec. 2021.

This article is a basic foundation for the role of the male gaze through gendered stereotypes. Serving as a benefit towards explaining the harms of the male gaze, this article helps to give insight into the way that the male gaze can be reflected in literature. The purpose of the article towards my paper helps to bring an academic perspective to the psychology of the male gaze and its relevance towards literature.

Kieran, Pearse. *A study of neurosis through the lens of scopophilia*. 2016. Dublin Business School, School of Arts, MA thesis. esource.dbs.ie/bitstream/handle/10788/3169/ma_pearse_k_2016.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y. Accessed 2 Nov. 2021.

This article helps to perceive the psychology of scopophilia and how it can be applied to reality. The harmful effects of this psychological theory are shown through experiments and real life application by Freud. The relevance to my paper is the way that scopophilia psychologically proves the relevance of the male gaze and shows perhaps the reasoning.

Leonard, DeLisa. *Women and bodily separation in literature from the Victorian era until today*. 2011. Eastern Michigan University, PhD dissertation. commons.emich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1345&context=theses. Accessed 1 Nov. 2021.

The purpose of this article is to show the Victorian Era style of women and their perceptions as well as roles from the male point of view. This most predominantly benefits the research behind Jane Eyre because of its relevance to the male gaze.

Women are beyond just the object of the male satisfaction but have depth and character as well.

Leu, Chelsea. "'Circe' Shows Us How Storytelling Is Power—And How That Power Can Be Seized." *Electric Literature*, 16 Apr. 2018, electricliterature.com/circe-shows-us-how-storytelling-is-power-and-how-that-power-can-be-seized/. Accessed 26 Nov. 2021.

This article helps to give a basis of information surrounding the female gaze shown within Madeline Miller's Circe. The purpose of this article is to take Leu's ideas of the power of the female narrative and apply it towards the female gaze in literature. Her points about destiny and influence give insight into the beauty and power of the female narrative.

Mulvey, Laura. "VISUAL PLEASURE IN NARRATIVE CINEMA." *Screen*, vol. 16, fall 1975, pp. 6-18. *LuxOnline*, www.luxonline.org.uk/articles/visual_pleasure_and_narrative_cinema(printversion).html. Accessed 18 Oct. 2021.

Laura Mulvey's film theory of the male gaze is the foundation part of my project. This article gives me the bones that I need to describe the male gaze. The purpose will be to use Mulvey's points about the male gaze and translate her thoughts into how it effects literature.

Sweeney, Christine A. *GENDERED GLANCES: THE MALE GAZE(S) IN VICTORIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE*. Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University, MA thesis. *Repository Library*, Georgetown University,

repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/553053/sweeneyChristine.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y. Accessed 27 Sept. 2021.

This thesis focuses on several approaches to the male gaze theories. The different approaches can serve as beneficial to my capstone project and the theories can help bring more in depth information to the material I will look at. There are various Victorian literature examples in this thesis that can help to give meaningful examples for the different literary theories. This thesis can serve as extremely beneficial to my paper as it gives in depth perceptions of the male gaze and its theories.

Symons, Alison. "Criticizing the Critical Male Gaze in Jane Eyre and Villette." Atlantic Association of Undergraduate English, 2004. *Atlantic Association of Undergraduate English Conference*, journals.msvu.ca › atlantis › article › download. Accessed 14 Oct. 2021. Working paper.

This paper is a focus on the male gaze in reference to Jane Eyre, specifically critiquing the harms that is has shown towards women in this Victorian society. Marriage and social status were perceived as the most important parts of a woman's life and men confined them to this idea. The points made in this paper help support my claim that women confined to the male gaze are stuck in a patriarchal domination which does not allow growth.

Vanbuskirk, Sarah. "What Is the Male Gaze?" *VeryWell Mind*, edited by Aaron Johnson, www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-male-gaze-5118422. Accessed 27 Sept. 2021.

I think this online source can be a great starting point for basic definitions of the male gaze while also seeing the psychological and mental effects of the male

gaze. This will be helpful in giving me foundational information to look at and use in my paper. The article talks about several ways that the male gaze is harmful and this can serve as information that will be used to support different examples in the text.