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## Feder, S. (Director). (2020). Disclosure: Trans Lives on Screen [Film]. Netflix.

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Feder, S. (Director). (2020). *Disclosure: Trans Lives on Screen* [Film]. Netflix.

Review of *Disclosure* (2020)

Sam Feder's (2020) documentary *Disclosure: Trans Lives on Screen* braids together an overview of trans cinema through the voices of transgender actors, clips from classic and current cinema, and commentary from trans academics. Featuring commentary from an impressive array of voices, including actress Laverne Cox and historian Susan Stryker, the film offers a variety of perspectives on film and representation. Beginning with an impressive timeline of trans representation, from the earliest representations of gender crossing in silent movies and ending upon the debut of *Pose*, in which trans people represent themselves, this Netflix Original offers a comprehensive visual history of trans representation and visibility for introductory classes on gender and sexuality studies, classes on the history of film, and classes which consider the history of LGBTQIA+ activism in the United States. *Disclosure* introduces topics such as stereotyping, racism, transphobia, homophobia, and transmisogyny within the context of popular culture. Throughout this review, I will consider multiple scenes from the film which may offer particularly rich avenues for discussion, including gazing and visibility, its discussion of trans lives on film from the dawn of cinema to the current moment, as well as the ways in which *Disclosure* provides a critique of visibility as the only path to trans liberation.

*Disclosure* centers its discussion of trans representation firmly through a trans gaze. The film opens on a clip from the Netflix original show *Sens8*, directed by Lana and Lilly Wachowski. Trans woman hacker, Nomi, intones, "Do you know that moment when you're sitting in a movie theatre and everyone's laughing at something and you just don't get it?" (0:10). Scholar Sarah Ahmed (2017) refers to such moments as a "feminist snap." These moments of filmic disconnect form the backbone of *Disclosure*, which dissects moments from American visual representation in which trans people are rendered hypervisible, made into jokes, or presented as deceitful. Trans actress Laverne Cox reflects on the history of trans film, celebrating advancements in representation while simultaneously mourning murdered trans people: "At this point where we're talking about unprecedented trans visibility, trans people are being murdered disproportionately still" (1:16). Indeed, the film's title—disclosure—refers to the act of disclosing one is trans, when doing so may provoke violence.

*Disclosure* is ideal viewing for introductory undergraduate classes which introduce students to concepts of gender and sexuality. The film shows clips from talk shows, in which transgender people are asked humiliating questions about their genitalia. Here, educators may introduce the concept of hypervisibility, and how it adds to the precarity in which many trans women of color live their lives. Educators may wish to introduce discussions of current events and the increased vilification of transgender people in the United States for undergraduate classes in women's and gender studies, as well as classes cross-listed within the women's and gender studies designation across history, political science, and sociology. For educators with a background in historical research, *Disclosure* might be compelling in the context of the legislative history of gender-crossing laws for undergraduate and graduates classes on the history of sex and gender. Discussions may consider how this increase in visibility may offer possible avenues for transgender worldbuilding in a time of public transphobia.

Many representations in popular culture poke fun at transgender people by rendering their existence into cruel jokes. The documentary surveys such representations, from comedic crossdressing in silent films to disparaging representations in popular television shows such as *How I Met Your Mother*. Educators might present the documentary alongside Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," or bell hooks' "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators," to introduce graduate classes and advanced undergraduate classes to the concept of the cisgender gaze in considering how dominant culture portrays marginalized groups. These transphobic moments may also provide evidence of how visual dehumanization and objectification functions on-screen, especially for undergraduate students in introductory classes on gender and sexuality.

The film unpacks how visual transphobia functions through the cisgender gaze of cinema. This cisgender gaze turns trans people into tokens who exist to further the narrative of a cisgender character (Rayon in *Dallas Buyers Club*) or into menacing killers (Buffalo Bill in *Silence of the Lambs*). For undergraduate courses which focus on race and gender in media, students might consider what messages these stereotypes convey about transgender people as a group. Assignments might ask students to watch mainstream television shows and record how trans people are represented.

*Disclosure* offers an intersectional reading of raced and gendered marginalization in film. In Sidney Drew's *A Florida Enchantment*, a Southern belle transforms into a dapper gentleman after taking magical seeds, while his black valet becomes violent when she takes the same magical seeds. In addressing this scene of raced and gendered crossing, *Disclosure* offers a visual overview of intersectionality as a concept. For classes which engage in inquiries of race, gender, and sexuality, *Disclosure* is a compelling introduction to intersectionality, especially when presented alongside the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw and Moya Bailey. For graduate seminars which are focused on historical research through an intersectional lens, educators may wish to bring the film into conversation with C. Riley Snorton's *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*, or Siobhan B. Somerville's *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*.

*Disclosure* ends with the words of historian Susan Stryker: "Having positive representation can only succeed...when it is part of a broader movement for social change" (1:42:10). Educators may wish to introduce the film in the context of trans liberation, perhaps in concert with Stryker's *Trans History*. Equally suited for undergraduate and graduate courses which focus on topics related to sexuality, race, gender, intersectionality, and cinema, *Disclosure* introduces concepts of gendered representation, and is ideal for introductory classes on gender, women's, and sexuality studies.