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ORCID# 0000-0003-0200-565X

The Female Body and Female Spectatorship in the American Silent Movie *Love 'em and Leave 'em*

Nisa Harika Güzel Köşker

Abstract

This article analyzes the objectification of the female body, the function of the male gaze, and the construction of female spectatorship in the American silent movie *Love 'em and Leave 'em* (1926). Directed by Frank Tuttle, the movie features in the opening credits a spectacle of a woman's legs, in silky, transparent stockings, and high-heeled shoes. This initial scene positions the attractive legs of one of its female characters and prompts the question whether or not the objectification of attractive female legs—in this case in almost monumental proportions— deprives women of their subjectivity by turning them into mere spectacles or commodities. However, it can be argued that the critical stance the movie assumes is a parody of the male gaze, rather than a simple presentation of stereotypical gender roles. While reframing traditional gender norms in a performance of parody, the movie also dismantles what critic Laura Mulvey calls a "hermetically sealed world", which plays on voyeuristic fantasies of the spectator. Correspondingly, the movie takes a step further by constructing a novel sphere for its spectators, in particular, female spectators, where they could observe distinct representations of the female body. Conjuring up a novel spectatorial sphere in which the spectator views the female body through a critical light, *Love 'em and Leave 'em* creates ruptures in phallocentric cinematic diegesis, destabilizes the spectator's expectations, and relocates their perception in relation to multifarious questions it poses in scenes of parodies, rather than serving male fantasies.

Keywords: Female Body, Female Spectatorship, Gender Roles, Male Gaze, *Love 'em and Leave 'em,* American Silent Movie

Love 'em and Leave 'em: Amerikan Sessiz Sinemasında Kadın Bedeni ve Kadın Seyirci Kavramı

Öz

Bu makale 1926 Amerikan yapımı *Love 'em and Leave 'em* başlıklı sessiz filmde kadın bedenin nesneleştirilmesi, erkek bakışı ve kadın izleyicilik kavramlarını irdelemektedir. Frank Tuttle tarafından yönetmenliği üstlenilen film, hemen ilk sahnesini yüksek topuklu ayakkabı ve ince ipeksi çorap giymiş kadın bacakları görseliyle açmaktadır. İlk sahne, neredeyse anıtlaştırılmış bir halde sunulan bu kadın bedeni görseliyle kadın bedeninin sırf görsel değeri olan eşya niteliğine dönüştürülerek kadınların bireyselliklerini ve kimliklerini yitirdikleri bir dünyanın kapılarını izleyicisine açmaktadır. Film, bu çabasıyla aslında erkek egemen toplumdaki erkek bakışını ve yaratılan erkek egemen algıların bir parodisini sunarken, geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini eleştirel bir biçimde ortaya koyar. Aynı zamanda, bu parodi yoluyla film, eleştirmen Laura Mulvey'in ortaya koyduğu "sıkı sıkıya kapatılmış", bir başka deyişle izleyicilerin izleme fiiline yönelik düşlemleriyle yaratılan dünyayı yıkmaktadır. Böylece, film bir adım öteye geçerek, kadın izleyicileri için kadın bedeninin farklı temsillerini sunarak, yine özellikle kadın izleyicileri için kadın bedenini farklı bir bakış açısıyla değerlendirebilecekleri yeni bir alan yaratır. Kadın izleyiciler için hiç de tanıdık olmayan bu alanda, *Love 'em and Leave 'em,* erkek egemen sinema anlatısında kırılmalara neden olarak, yine erkek egemen düşlemlerin yerine izleyicilerin kadın bedeni üzerindeki algısını sahnedeki parodi aracılığıyla sarsma ve çeşitli sorular sorarak değiştirme eğilimi göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadın Bedeni, Kadın İzleyiciler, Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rolleri, Erkek Bakış Açısı, *Love 'em and Leave 'em*, Amerikan Sessiz Sineması

Adapted from a play of the same title (1926) by George Abbott and John V.A. Weaver, the 1926 production American silent movie *Love 'em and Leave 'em* is a dramedy that transcends the issues of romantic love in the alluring world of a department store in the 1920s in New York. An indicator of its particular sociohistorical context, the movie offers a picture of change in the 1920s for the American people who were going through social, cultural, and economic transformation, and in particular for women who were leaving their domestic sphere for work and acknowledgement in public workplaces with the influx of the Progressive Era. While reflecting this change through a meticulous emphasis on its female characters, the movie parodies, as this article argues, the conventional gender norms with a specific focus on their subversion and replacement of them by alternative perspectives of evaluating the female body and the position of female spectatorship. In light of this parody and the conspicuous representation of the female body in the movie, this article examines how the movie treats the female body as a critical venue to be explored in relation to the various meanings phallocentrism has long attached to it and how the male gaze is subverted as the movie tends to allocate more space for the female spectator as the holder of the gaze.

That *Love 'em and Leave 'em* begins with a spectacle of a woman's legs planted in silky, transparent stockings, escalated and erected upon the high-heeled shoes presents an initial scene of voyeurism, "a phallic substitute" (Mulvey, "Fears, Fantasies and the Male Unconscious" 10) and a representation of the female body as a pleasurable object. The corporeal position of the actress whose upper part is not displayed on the screen and the choice of clothing add a significant dimension to its dehumanization. As critics Adler and Pointon reflect in their "The Body as Language" (1993), this very first depiction of the female body illuminates the question whether the body is a "historically specific entity, invested in ideology, and not a biological construct" (128). Though this portrait of the female body seems to serve the male phantasies (and also function as the reflection of the Freudian castration complex) and though it refers to the historically and ideologically commodified, passive position of femininity and sexualized representation of the female body, the recurrent images of the female body in the movie alter and undermine the politics of traditional gender performance, opening up new venues for novel perceptions of the female body and femininity for its own time and

thereafter. The initial portrayal of the female body reminds the spectator of the ways in which the female body becomes a commodified object or a conspicuous congenial monument to be displayed. As such, in line with patriarchal gender codes, the nude legs with the attractive silk stockings can be considered a phallus-like monument that aims to give pleasure to the spectator, in particular to male spectators. Although the representation of the female body or legs as a pleasure-giving object seems to promote the workings of the hegemonic patriarchal world, various representations of the female body in the movie subvert the power mechanisms of phallocentrism and of visual pleasure through a diverse composition of parodies of such mechanisms.

The Female Body, Male Gaze, and Female Spectatorship

Questions central to cinematic production and the female body have so far been discussed in relation to gender roles and the male gaze in patriarchal social structures. Since the 1970s, cultural theories on cinema have focused on the mechanisms of phallocentrism and on the question how cinema is able to create new meanings and redefine or subvert existing social norms. Theories of visual pleasure in relation to cinema, in particular Laura Mulvey's significant arguments in her seminal article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) (and thereafter her and other feminist critics' thoughts on the intersection of the cinema and sociocultural theories), center on scopophilia, the pleasure in looking, which for the most part is affiliated with the male gaze that voyeuristically enjoys the objectification of the female body within a cinematic diegesis. Still before the Mulveyian paradigms on the intersection and functionality of cinema and working social mechanisms, the cinema was growing as an independent field of interrogation in the U.S. academia. In his 1956 article, "How- and What- Does a Movie Communicate?" scholar John Houseman focused on the functionality of motion pictures in communicating "energy and excitement" to the spectator (230). He suggests that the "movie makers' contagious energy meet the excitement of their audiences, most of whom had never been exposed to dramatic entertainment before and who now rushed into the meeting, uncritical and unreasoning, their eyes wide with wonder and gratitude, in this mythical and fantastic world of their mutual creation" (230). Houseman's argument proposes that this "energy and excitement" (230) urges the spectator to embrace and question new forms of ideas and that the meeting of the motion picture with the spectator conjures up a mutual sphere where the spectator

could experience transformation and cathartic involvement. This link between the spectator and the image on the screen has been rendered more palpable with the rise of the feminist film critique in the 1970s with feminist critics' special emphasis on the relation of the male gaze to the working social mechanisms of patriarchy on the screen.

Feminist film scholarship explicitly interrogated the multifarious meanings that the cinema is able to evoke and the forms of involvement of the spectator. Feminist film criticism considered the cinema an analytical site that is able to create a meaning that serves the critical perception of a subject by the spectator, which overall composes a diegesis, a cinematic narrative in the study of phallocentric social norms. Mulvey's article is groundbreaking in the sense that it fundamentally underlines the power of phallocentrism and the meanings embedded culturally into the gender norms. Mulvey principally asserts that the cinema is an "advanced representation system" that "poses questions about the ways the unconscious (formed by the dominant order) structures the ways of seeing and pleasure in looking" (15). Perhaps, more significantly, the cinema, perceived as a relatively effortless art form by the spectator, is in fact structured and given a shape by dominant discourses and gender constructs, whereby it produces the product that has produced itself. It can thus be argued that the cinema serves the mechanism of patriarchal order, rendering the image -primarily the image of female embodiment - a pleasurable object to be viewed. In particular, as Mulvey asserts, the "magic of Hollywood style at its best (and all of the cinema which fell within the sphere of influence) arose, not exclusively, but in one important aspect, from its skilled and satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure" (16). In the face of this deep-seated perception of visual pleasure, Mulvey calls for an "alternative cinema" that "provides a space for the birth of a cinema which is radical in both a political and an aesthetic sense and challenges the basic assumptions of the mainstream film," and that "starts specifically by reacting against these ["the physical obsessions of the society"] obsessions and assumptions" (15-16).

What mainstream movie industry does, in Mulvey's terms, is in fact to code "the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order," and she offers an alternative cinema that analyzes "pleasure, or beauty" within that erotic code since it "destroys" the authority arising from visual pleasure (16). Thus, pointing to the link between the power of cinematic representations and the unconscious hegemonic social

constructs, Mulvey argues that the "fascination of film is reinforced by pre-existing patterns of fascination already at work within the individual subject and the social formations that have moulded him" (14). At the center of this mechanism lies "the paradox of phallocentrism," which "depends on the image of the castrated women to give order and meaning to its world" (14). As Mulvey argues,

> An idea of woman stands as a linchpin to the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence, it is her desire to make good the lack that the phallus signifies. […] Woman's desire is subjugated to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound; she can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it. […] Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier of the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning (14-15).

Drawing on Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, Mulvey claims that the female image has a central role in the dominant phallocentric order and "women in representation can signify castration, and active voyeuristic or fetishistic mechanisms" (25). In the opening credits, the transparent legs remind the male spectator of the phallus, providing a prototype of the erect power of the imaginary phallus while adding a mode of eroticism to the movie. Though this initial portrayal of the female body as an image of the phallus serves the male phantasies, it can also be accounted for a threat of castration, which has the power to create a rupture in the unity of the diegesis for the male spectator. Thus, the stylized female body is the "direct recipient of the spectator's look," as it prompts the scopophilic instinct through which "the spectator is absorbed into a voyeuristic situation within the screen and diegesis" (Mulvey 22-23). Within this sexual disparity, "pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female," a construct where "the determining male gaze projects its fantasy on the female figure, which is stylized" (Mulvey 19). As Sotirios Bampatzimopoulos explicates, in classic cinematic narratives, "male characters are the ones that advance the plot by being active, while female characters function as a passive spectacle that pauses the narrative and offers pleasure both to the male gaze of the

protagonist, as well as the patriarchal gaze of the audience" (207). As women are thought to be passive bearers of meaning, not the active makers of it, which thus makes the male gaze always the holder of the controlling gaze, it is always the female body that is thrown into a crisis about visibility and pleasure. *Love 'em and Leave 'em* challenges such strict binaries in scenes where the idea of the female body that is displayed as a spectacle under the control of the male gaze is contested and destabilized.

Love 'em and Leave 'em features the story of two sisters, Janie and Mame, who are completely opposite characters. Janie, with her more carefree disposition, is an epitome of the flapper in the 1920s as opposed to Mame who is portrayed as a reasonable and responsible traditional woman. While *Love 'em and Leave 'em* powerfully reflects the changing gender norms in the beginnings of the twentieth century with the characterization of Janie, Mame stands for the typical Victorian ideals of womanhood of the previous decades. It can however be argued that, with the twist in her characterization in the course of the movie, Mame comes to defy these ideals and norms as she goes through a transformation, where she happens to perceive marriage and traditional gender norms as detrimental to her individuality and personal integrity. Both Janie and Mame's acts represent the transformation that female gender norms were going through in the 1920s. As Patricia Raub contends, "the Twenties was a decade in which a new morality was in the process of being negotiated, a decade in which women were beginning to try on new social roles" (111). It was thus the time when new roles of women emerged with the rise of the ideas of the New Woman and flappers in the United States. The term the New Woman culturally evolved through the female activism of the period; yet, the term flapper, with an image of immoral and trespassing woman, had rather a negative connotation. As Joshua Zeitz argues, though flappers "came to designate young women in their teens and twenties who subscribed to the libertine principles," they were no more than "the notorious character type who bobbed her hair, smoked cigarettes, drank gin, sported short skirts, and passed her evenings in steamy jazz clubs, where she danced in a shockingly immodest fashion with a revolving cast of male suitors" (5-6). Although there was no agreement as to the rise and use of the term flapper among historians, flappers were viewed as carefree, unrestrained, and mobile, which were all quite contrary to the gender norms of the time. Still, with the rise of the flapper figure,

who "has thrown off the conventions of her Victorian predecessors to crop her hair, shorten her skirt, and dance the Charleston" (Raub 109), this passage to a newly emerging understanding of female identity came as a significant breakthrough in the definitions of femininity in defiance of antebellum womanhood ideals, and in fact granted mobility and freedom to the American woman in the 1920s.

It is through this portrayal of social and cultural transformation that *Love 'em and Leave 'em* showcases the new role of women that is still alien to the 1920s United States, mainly because both the general term the New Woman and more stereotyped depiction of flappers played the active roles, overthrowing the restrictions of patriarchy in unexpected ways. As phallocentric gender norms shun placing the male characters in a sexually objectified position, the traditional cinematic diegeses put them in active roles in the progression of the story. *Love 'em and Leave 'em* reverses this hegemonic structure by enabling the female characters to take the lead in controlling the main events and by subverting the patriarchal order in a series of parodical scenes. Janie and Mame's father is absent in the movie, but an influence of Mame and Janie's mother is always felt even through her framed photograph and the promise Mame has made to her mother to take care of her younger sister, Janie. As the movie parodies the gender roles, it juxtaposes Janie and Mame's active involvement in the events and the acts of three male characters- Bill -Mame's husband-to-be -, Lem -the horse-dealer, and Mr. Schwartz -the department store manager- who can be considered substitute patriarchs, or "screen surrogates" (Mulvey 20) for male spectators, to highlight the operation of the male gaze and objectification of female embodiment.

After its initial attempt to subvert the existing gender norms and binaries with the scene of the legs, the movie reminds its spectators of "the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and the spectacle" (Mulvey 14) together with the perception of the female body as the passive recipient of the active male gaze, as a symbol of "to-be-looked-at-ness" and of the "shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen" (Mulvey 19). From this point on, *Love 'em and Leave 'em* dramatizes parodical scenes that subvert the objectification of the female body and the dominance of the male gaze in relation to female spectators. In the following scene, the baby doll with which Mame tickles Janie's leg reiterates the voyeurism of the first scene. Mame

holds the mechanic doll baby to wake Janie up as she is shown sleeping on her bed. Mame switches on the baby doll and tickles Janie's feet with its walking movements, which signifies Mame's attempt to invest movement and life in Janie's stiff body. At this very moment, the fact that Janie is sleeping and lying on the bed like a statue creates an erotic impact, positioning her in the circle of "to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey 19). The animation of the baby doll operates as a mechanism that shatters the comfort of the male gaze together with Mame's move that is also an obstacle placed before the active controlling male gaze.

The movie lays bare the phallocentric superiority of the male gaze with such specific objects as the baby doll, which is battery-operated and represents the animation of something that is as mechanical and artificial as the fetishized female body. With the baby doll's sudden transformation to a mobile object, if not human, the scene turns into a scene of parody, presenting the ridicule created by the incongruity between naturalness of the female body and its objectification imposed by the male gaze. The movie as a form of dramedy exposes the seriousness of its criticism by dramatizing the parodical treatment of scenes in a ritual of comedy. The movie deploys laughter to transfer its critique to its spectators. Laughter instigated by parody becomes a critical tool; since, as critic M. Bakhtin describes, laughter is "as universal as seriousness; it was directed at the whole world, at history, at all societies, at ideology" (84). It becomes "the world's second truth extended to everything and from which nothing is taken away" (Bakhtin 84). As the movie illustrates, parody comes to function as "the festive aspect of the whole world in all its elements, the second revelation of the world in play and laughter" (Bakhtin 84). The act of tickling turns the stagnant scene into a parody, through which Janie's idealized body is contested and replaced with one that is stripped of sexuality. Tickling and Janie's becoming mobile shatter the objectifying, controlling and active male gaze on Janie's body, dislocating the statue-like stillness the voyeuristic phallocentrism imposes on the female body. The parodical treatment of this scene undermines the fetishization of the female body, destroying the pleasure the male gaze derives from the objectified female body, and urging the spectator to think about the exposed discrepancy.

If parody is the revelation of the ridicule, the parody in the movie holds the ridicule to the public gaze rather than only to the male one. Thus, parody in *Love 'em and Leave 'em* touches on the basic definition

of parody as "an imitation which exaggerates the characteristics of a work or a style for comic effect" (xi), as John Gross describes, and yet transcends it by operating on a level where it "pushes beyond its strict boundaries" (xiii) and where "mimicry turns into an independent fantasy" (xiii). Parody of both the conventional gender norms and the objectifying nature of the male gaze invite the spectator of the movie to what Gross calls "a fantasy" (xiii), as it transgresses such norms of the hegemonic order, challenging them through mockery. Whereas Janie's position as the female icon represents the display of the female body as a model of a corporeal spectacle of male voyeurism, Mame's acts continually problematize such conceptualizations by preventing Janie's body from becoming an epitome of an erotic spectacle as well as a mechanical commodified object. While breaking down the patriarchal cinematic diegesis through a rupture created against the voyeuristic intentions of the male spectator, Mame produces a realm for the female viewer to inspect Janie as a subject, showing them the possibility to take an active critical stance in their evaluations as female spectators.

The movie's critique of the dominant relation of the male gaze to female embodiment is further reconstituted in the scene where the opening scene repeats itself but with the gaze of the camera following Janie's legs, and presenting them once again as the attractive erotic object drawing the attention of the male gaze. Mr. Schwartz, the director of the department store, gazes at Janie's legs. The spectator sees Janie's iconic legs here again, yet now also through the eyes of Mr. Schwartz, who is "in charge of window displays – and interested in other exhibitions (Arthur Donaldson)" (*Love 'em and Leave 'em*). Yet, Miss Amelia Streeter, "the forewoman of the sales force and President of the Ginsburg Employees' Welfare League", catches his gaze, as he seems to be enjoying the spectacle of Janie's legs. It can be argued that Mr. Schwartz's gaze is problematized here; since, while Janie is arranging the hats in the store on a stool, his gaze is shown prior to Miss Streeter. In this scene, where Miss Streeter and Mr. Schwartz are the two spectators in sight, Janie or her half moving leg becomes the object of scopophilic fantasy. As Mr. Schwartz's eye catches the sight of Janie's legs, his facial expression reveals that he enjoys the view. However, when Miss Streeter spots the point Mr. Schwartz is looking at, she immediately controls Mr. Schwartz's gaze by gesturing her awareness.

What qualifies this scene is Miss Amelia Streeter's critical

gaze: The meeting of the eyes of Mr. Schwartz and Miss Amelia Streeter pointedly subverts the male gaze that reigns over the female body. Miss Amelia Streeter's controlling eyes shape Mr. Schwartz up, shattering his voyeuristic intent. It can be discussed that the movie creates this awareness on the part of the female characters and female spectators alike who are expected to act out their consciousness of the voyeuristic eyes on the female body. As critic Mary Ann Doane contends in her "Female Spectatorship and Machines of Projection," the female characters' position in relation to one another reveal "the contradictions which emerge when the attempt to position the woman as subject of the gaze is accompanied by an acknowledgement of her status as the privileged content of the image" (155). That another female character is critically assuming the role of the male gaze thus reminds the female spectator that they can absent themselves from their position as monumental objects and nonexistent spectators to assuming the role of active subjects and critical spectators. With Miss Amelia Streeter's involvement in the scene as a spectator, the movie adds the female gaze next to the male gaze, which eventually enhances the function of the female gaze within the movie. The complicated tension between seeing and being seen provides the female spectator with the power to detect and control the male gaze within the movie as well as observing the incongruities and gender inequality on the screen and in social practices.

As Mulvey maintains, "the presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation" (19). As the erotic female embodiment in conventional cinematic narratives pauses the action, it enables the male gaze to freeze time and to enjoy the scene voyeuristically. *Love 'em and Leave 'em* again undermines this freezing function and quality of the male gaze that turns the female body into mere monumental commodities through the scenes in which the female embodiment gains mobility and an active function as opposed to its previous frozen representations. A similar scene takes place when Bill helps Mame climb on a chair and stand in an upright position to clean her dress with the help of the fan after her coworker spills the powder over her dress accidentally. The moment Mame's body is to become an erotic monument just like Janie's body, its exposition to the fan grants it with mobility and frees it from becoming a frozen image,

dispersing the voyeuristic looks as she cleans off the powder on her dress. In contradistinction to the conventional pause provided for the male gaze by the conventional cinematic narratives, her pose to the fan and the powder on her dress render the scene a parody full of laughter, leaving no space for the male gaze to stabilize the female body after Mame's impeccable image of female embodiment is ruined by the spill of powder and the movement provided by the fan.

Such parodical representations of the attempts to immobilize the female body become the movie's critical tool in the revelation of the social boundaries or prejudices in the perception and implementation of gender norms. Parody in these scenes powerfully illustrates the ridicule by distortion and mockery, offering alternatives for representation. Parody brings mobility to such strict scenes that seem under the control of the static, freezing, and immobilizing male gaze through intermingling the female characters' involvement as agents and interrogating spectators who are able to construct distinct meanings in the cinematic diegesis. Though the effect of parody for the spectator may seem to be humorous at first, it deconstructs the existing impact of patriarchy's social operations and replaces them with alternative views. An equally overwhelming effect of parody is that it eliminates the strictness of the frozen effect of the male gaze, bringing humor and thus an alternative perspective through which to critique working social mechanisms. In this evaluation, the movie treats the concept of love as a venue that brings this critique into light. The title *Love 'em and Leave 'em* itself offers a mockery of the romantic love affairs, implying the failure of love affairs in the movie due to oppressive social practices of patriarchy.

Love 'em and Leave 'em's deployment of frames further endorses its parody of love. The movie is fraught with distinct forms of frames, and draws the attention of the spectator to the frames, mirrors, windows, window displays, and doorways, which all enhance the spectator's position as those who satisfy "a primordial wish for pleasurable looking" (Mulvey 17). Thus, there appears a strong tendency for both the characters and the spectator to be lured into the frames through which they can further brood on the state of affairs among the characters and the intriguing function of spectatorship. In the course of the movie, this disposition is largely nourished by Mame's acts and her transformation from a conventional woman to a rather nonconformist one due to her disappointment in her relationship with Bill. First, Bill steals Mame's creative idea in the window-dressing scene and then he

cheats on her with her own sister. The most striking example of this process can be observed in her attempt to enliven the drab windows inhabited by mannequins. Quite like a human greenhouse, the display windows of the department store present mannequins as the ideal shape of the human body. As Mary Ann Doane argues in view of spectacles and spectatorship, "the body adorned for the gaze" becomes "the ultimate commodity" (156) and as the business of department stores includes a world of spectacles and commodities, the store windows dramatize the captivity of human beings, whose bodies are thought to be mere objects of visual pleasure. Mame's creativity however functions to overthrow this system by granting mobility and movement to the stability of the commodifying system with the help of natural or live objects like the kitten. Since commodification of the human body or embellishment of the body with artificial materials are all intended to make the body look erotic and appealing to the scopophilic eye, re-designing the window and animating it through the kitten becomes a strategy that subverts the existing system of power and perplexes spectators' perceptions.

In the window arrangement scene where Mr. Schwartz asks for a rearrangement of the window of the department store, Bill takes the same fan to make the window decoration "breezy" (*Love 'em and Leave 'em*). However, when he fails in stripping the window of its dull and stagnant nature, Mame offers to put the fan on the floor, which renders the entirety of the window and mannequins' clothes breezy, as Mr. Schwartz wishes. Bill capitalizes on Mame's idea, pretending that the whole idea of enlivening the window with the movement of the fan was his. Though Mr. Schwartz rewards Bill for this bright idea, he cannot realize the fact that it was indeed Mame's idea that breaks the stillness of the window and thus the enjoyment and pleasure that the male gaze invests in the mannequins. The mobility of the once still bodies of the mannequins bewilders the spectators of the display window as they seem excited about gazing more at the window's new breezy state through the window frame of the department store. In this process, it can be argued that the real spectators in the theater could also feel encouraged to gain consciousness about the process of viewing and their status as viewers by observing the reactions of the display window spectators.

The spectators of the movie promptly notice Bills' hypocrisy through the critical comment in the intertitles "Bill dressed the window that night 'all by himself' (*Love 'em and Leave 'em*), if not the spectators of the invigorated window within the movie. Mr. Schwartz tells Bill that

he has the "artistic touch", but Bill still does not acknowledge that this is Mame's idea. He dismisses Mame's idea when she suggests enlivening the window with the kitten, saying, "Be yourself, Mame. This ain't any animal store". Yet, just before Mr. Schwartz praises Bill again for this idea, Bill tells Mame that the kitten has "spoiled my [his] whole effect". Having heard Mr. Schwartz's praise, Bill pretends to be the creator of the idea and receives the promotion, thereby repeating his behavior by capitalizing on Mame's talent. Mame once again is left without any appreciation and acknowledgement whereas Bill gets the promotion. As is illustrated in these scenes, the movie provokes the thoughts of the spectator in view of the phallocentric mechanisms of seeing and women's disadvantageous and inferior position in society. Bill's hypocrisy becomes more visible for the spectator when Mame's talent is not valued and when he takes advantage of her intellect and steals her ideas, assuming them as his own. Mame's ideas not only mobilize the female bodies within the display window but they confute the attribution of passiveness to both femininity and female spectatorship as well. These scenes together with the satirical intertitles help spectators feel sure of Bill's hypocrisy when he tells Mame that one day her talent will be discovered by Mr. Schwartz; however, it is Bill himself who hides the fact that the display window is Mame's own artistic product.

Mame's role in showing the female spectators the prospect of developing a critical approach to the screen is further embedded in the movie's use of intertitles. In the construction of a novel sphere for the female spectators, it can be argued that the intertitles build a frame drawn around the relevant scene. By means of the intertitles, the movie first becomes self-referential, and then critical of the images passing on the screen. Even remarks of irony or mockery of the preceding or following scenes are imbedded in the intertitles, whereby the intertitles take the form of a narrative where the characters, events, attitudes, and setting become more intelligible for the spectator. The critical stance the movie assumes in relation to its use of intertitles also affirms what critic Michel Chion states about the function of intertitles in cinematic narratives in the 1920s. Chion claims that intertitles, which were "the subject of much debate in the 1920s" (16) in their relation to the audience, "conjure up a 'narrator' whose detachment may allow for ironic commentary on the action" (14). *Love 'em and Leave 'em*'s deployment of intertitles evinces that not only do the intertitles efficaciously frame, foreground and provide an ironical narrative succession and progress to the movie,

but they also challenge the expectations of the spectator through their satirical content.

Mame further diverts the male gaze from its pleasure-taking mechanism in her attempt to animate the window display. Each intertitle sarcastically comments on the male desire to control power. The intertitles following these scenes parody Bill's attitude, "Bill dressed the window *all by himself*" and "Window dressing tires a *man* out" [Italics mine]. If it were Mame who receives Mr. Schwartz's appreciation, she would get the promotion, and her superiority and creativity would be acclaimed. In addition to the parodical perspective the intertitles offer, the kitten's movements destroy the immobile male gaze by directing it to wherever it moves, thus shuttering its fixity on the female body and shunning the collapse of the female body as a result of objectification. The kinesis of the kitten defies the static decoration of the windows, which also perpetuate the control of the male gaze. Likewise, the movement introduced by the fan to the mannequins, which are synthetic replicas of the human body, reinforces the failure of the operation of the objectifying male gaze.

From the very beginning, the movie speaks to the images of the phallocentric world that reflect formulaic gender norms. When Janie does not await her turn and goes into the bathroom, Bill says through the intertitles, "Ain't that just like a woman!" in a tone that undervalues women. Mame's acts go against such formulae, however. Mame is an active vigorous contemplator throughout the movie, and she reverses biased and stereotyped gender categories. No matter how disillusioned she is due to Bill's disheartenment and infidelity, she does not give in to any form of mechanism that can control her. She remains true to her personal integrity, and also asserts herself by acknowledging her status as an active actress as well as a spectator who controls the spectacle with her artistic touches. Mame's role in the movie is crucially rewarding for the female spectator; since she is transformed from a passive woman into a holder of the gaze, a spectator, an active role that corresponds to the rising cognizance of the female spectators about the ever-active phallocentric surveillance mechanism in the cinematic diegesis. The female spectator is persistently incited to watch images of desire, and view how the female body is made to remain subordinate and as a mere commodity that is prone to constant exchange. In the display window scenes, the movie positions the spectator of the movie as a reflection of the viewers of that display window within the movie, while at the same time it also constantly invites them to evaluate the female

characters' transformation and to recall their position as spectators of the transforming images.

While the movie presents a parodical treatment of the male characters' gaze, it suggests the possibility of female spectatorship along with a new form of a gaze, that of a female one, with Mame's active involvement in the events. Mame takes the power to orientate the meaning making process away from the two patriarchs of the movie first from Bill and then from Lem by holding the power of gaze in her hands. In this process, the movie juxtaposes two scenes that come one after another: First, the scene where Bill kisses Janie in her room, Janie becomes the object of Bill's gaze and the male spectator's gaze as her body becomes another object of voyeuristic fantasy when she lies down on the coach, and secondly, the scene where Mame sees Bill and Janie kissing each other through the doorway. In the first scene, Janie's assuming an objectified state on the coach creates once again a sight in which her body and femininity is exposed to be sexually attractive. The movie discloses such scenes in which kissing an attractive woman becomes a scopophilic spectacle for the spectators: the moment Bill kisses Janie after Mame goes on a vacation, the camera shoots the puppets kissing each other, which reflect the parodical replica of their love-making. Bill's gaze is always located superior to Janie's as though he is overlooking and controlling her. While kissing Janie, Bill's body is shown to be covering Janie's body so that the spectator could see only Bill's body and therefore his superior position in relation to Janie. At this very moment, the spectator can also observe one of his legs pushing a male puppet and the puppet's kissing the female puppet. The simultaneous kiss of the puppets does refer less to the authenticity of the romance between Janie and Bill than to the parodical representation of Bill and Janie's deceitful love affair. Since, as in line with Mulvey's arguments, phallocentric world nourishes a space of representations, Bill's gaze embodies the voyeuristic male fantasy in this scene, in which the male gaze eliminates and undervalues the female body and femininity.

This is the very scene where both Bill and Janie cheat on Mame, Bill as her lover and Janie as her sister. In the following scene Mame reverses the dominance of the male gaze when she witnesses Bill and Janie kissing each other through the doorway. This is the second time that Bill and Janie's kiss constructs a voyeuristic view, yet now with the twist of the female gaze and female spectator. Mame's gross disillusionment is contrasted with the carnivalesque atmosphere she creates in the party

where she plans to announce their marriage. While Mame remains loyal to Bill in the countryside, she witnesses her neighbor's family happiness and decides that money is not an obstacle to marry Bill. When she comes back earlier than expected with the hope of marrying Bill, she tells her friends about her decision. While the movie parodies socially accepted, romantic relationships, it also reframes Bill and Janie's relationship from a voyeuristic perspective in this scene. Before the spectator of the movie sees them kissing, the people in the house hide and watch them in darkness. The people of the house as the spectators of this scene are positioned as voyeurs, reflecting the stance of this movie's spectators in relation to the scopophilic view. Mulvey considers "the extreme contrast between the darkness in the auditorium (which also isolates the spectators from one another) and the brilliance of the shifting patterns of light and shade on the screen" (17) to be promoting the mechanism of the "hermetically sealed world" (17) and the illusion of the voyeuristic separation. This specific spot, the doorway, where Mame stands and views them is significant as it breaks down the voyeuristic frame through which the male gaze objectifies the female body. Mame constructs a new frame for the female spectator to remind them of their forced status as erotic spectacles within the movie and in social life, inviting them to develop a critical eye as holders of the gaze. The movie hence juxtaposes whatever Mame views as a romantic love with the deception she is exposed to by Bill and Janie firstly when they see a poster "Circus Love" after getting out of the theater and secondly in her witnessing the very moment of Bill's kissing Janie. Signifying the deception and infidelity of Bill and Janie, the poster comes as a critique of oppressive relationships that, just like Bill does in his relationship with Mame, overpower and manipulate women. Not only does Bill cheat on Mame, but he also takes all chances to get the promotion by constantly fooling her.

The movie develops concurrent scenes of masquerade towards its end, where spectators see in different settings Janie and Mame in costumes that foreground their femininity. While Janie is shown to be dancing in the Welfare League Dance party, Mame is after Lem, the horse dealer, to get back the money Janie has given to him. She is not only after Lem and the money, but she also feels an urgent need to regain her dignity as Miss Streeter accuses her of stealing the money due to Janie's lie. Janie causes Mame's accusation inconsiderately in order not to reveal to Miss Streeter that she has spent the money on horse race and lost it. These two scenes are once again fraught with images

of femininity where the spectators see Janie and Mame's femininity in excessive forms. Janie's extreme femininity in a costume, which renders her more like a baby doll, and Mame's oriental costume that invests her femininity with a more mysterious and attractive touch can be considered forms of masquerade in a carnivalesque backdrop. Masquerade with such a distinct emphasis on femininity enable the female characters to gain agency and freedom; and it brings carnivalesque elements into the service of parody. As Joan Riviere contends, women are "acting a part" under masquerade to protect themselves from the fierceness of the male world, since "the mask of femininity" (307-308) endow them with acknowledgement in the dominance of the patriarchal order. In this scene, carnivalesque elements provided by masquerade help both Janie and Mame "celebrate[d] temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order", as carnival signifies "the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions" (Bakhtin 10) and of the oppressive patriarchs in the movie. Janie is subjected to Lem's deceit and fraud, but it is Mame who is subjected to both her sister's and Lem's deceit. The masquerade provides them with a comfort zone where Janie escapes Miss Streeter's repressions and where Mame pursues Lem to take back Janie's money and her self-esteem.

The whole scene of Welfare League Dance is presented as a masquerade where the carnivalesque atmosphere subverts all formulae related to identity categories. All of the characters, Janie, Miss Streeter, Mr. Schwartz, Bill are dressed in costumes in the masquerade. Janie, on the one hand, dancing just like a puppet, diverts the attention of Miss Streeter to escape from the accusation of stealing the League's money. On the other hand, she attracts the attention of Mr. Schwartz as he makes advances on her and offers to dine out after the party. Where their social hierarchies and gender identities as the employer and the employee become blurred, Janie makes use of this new state to make Mr. Schwartz think of recruiting Mame in his own department. As Mary Ann Doane suggests, what Janie performs is to "flaunt her femininity, produce herself as an excess of femininity, in other words, foreground the masquerade" (*Film and the Masquerade 25*) Her femininity renders her more submissive and affectionate when she dances with Mr. Schwartz. It further helps her manipulate Mr. Schwartz with her compliments, making him "feel as young as any of the young men" (*Love 'em and Leave 'em*) in the party. She later is able to attract Mr. Ginsburg's attention and wins the prize

in the masquerade, covering over her mistake in losing the money on horse race with her femininity in her conversation with Mr. Ginsburg. She eventually leaves the party with Mr. Ginsburg in his Rolls Royce, eluding Mr. Schwartz's advances. Janie's legs are visible again in this scene where her presentation like a puppet or a mechanical mannequin corresponds to the earlier spectacle of her legs' objectification, which this time she turns into her own advantage.

In the ensuing scene, Mame mocks the male pleasure of looking at an eroticized woman when she gets dressed in oriental clothes to get back the money Lem has stolen from Janie. She intentionally wears a veil and a mystical oriental costume, assuming excessive femininity as a weapon against the male fascination of the female image. Only when she flaunts her femininity, as Doane puts it, she becomes able to reverse Lem's voyeuristic looks back to him by superintending his gaze. During this scene, Mame remains on the side of the spectator by constantly watching Lem's sexual advances. She takes the purse from Lem secretly when she sees no other way but kissing him. However, this scene turns into a battle when Lem realizes that Mame stole his purse and takes his purse by force. Whereas one might question whether Mame's personality is under the threat of a collapse after their violent struggle over the purse, it can be argued that she preserves her control over Lem through defending herself and the masquerade she performs in this scene. She triumphs over Lem as she skillfully takes on the roles of a producer, a director, an actress and a spectator of the small parody she shoots, and presents the control she has during directing the gaze as a spectator, an actress, and a director.

Doane clarifies the oppression of the male dominance through the term masquerade and states that "the very fact that we can speak of a woman 'using' her sex or 'using' her body for particular gains is highly significant - it is not that a man cannot use his body in this way but that he doesn't have to. The masquerade doubles representation; it is constituted by a hyperbolisation of the accoutrements of femininity" (*Film and The Masquerade* 26). Masquerade in *Love 'em and Leave 'em* functions as a play of attaining power and freedom for Mame and Janie in the patriarchal world. In this carnivalesque atmosphere, Janie is shown dancing like a puppet in her shiny black dress, yet she is no longer an animation of fetishized female body as she overcomes the male superiority by controlling her femininity in the face of Mr. Schwartz's

advances. Likewise, though Mame brings the League's money to the party and is fired by Miss Streeter "without a reference", she defies all constrictions by enjoying the dance, saying that she will not leave the party "without a dance". Masquerade becomes a dialogical link to the female subjectivity, giving it freedom and agency. Though they face threat in the supremacy of the patriarchs in the movie, Mame and Janie do not yield to the masculine desire and objectification. In the masquerade, they strip their bodies of the specular investment, rejecting conformity to the deceit of men's world. Masquerade takes the form of a carnival, which is the "true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal" as it is "hostile to all that was immortalized and completed" (Bakhtin 10). With the final parody of the gender norms that is portrayed by the masquerade and carnivalesque atmosphere, the movie introduces to its spectators an economy of variety that endows the female characters with freedom and superiority over the male characters, transforming the official authority in phallocentrism into a revolutionary and regenerative state.

In Doane's argument, masquerade's link to the look is intriguing as it causes attenuation of the dominancy of the male gaze. As she contends, "By destabilising the image, the masquerade confounds this masculine structure of the look. It effects a defamiliarisation of female iconography. Nevertheless, the preceding account simply specifies masquerade as a type of representation, which carries a threat, disarticulating male systems of viewing ("Film and The Masquerade" 26). Doane offers masquerade as a confrontation with and an opposition to the voyeuristic male gaze and its stabilizing impact. If this is a disturbance that can be perceived as a rupture in the functionality of the male gaze, then the parody of the male gaze subverts the narcissistic identification of the male gaze with the female body by desexualizing the female body itself. This twist the movie poses for the female subjectivity invites potential cinematic relationships of femininity to the screen, thereby shifting the attention on spectatorship from the male gaze towards a more neutral or feminine one. Perhaps one of the most critical scenes the movie poses in respect to the spectacle and spectatorship presents the most visible example of the relation of the screen to the female spectator when Mame looks into the mirror in her room. The spectators can perceive that there is a photograph on top of the mirror, looking at Mame. The woman in the photo looks like Mame or her mother. The moment Mame and this photograph are seen on the same screen looking at each other endorses the movie's search for acknowledgement of the female spectator. In addition to this picture frame, there are various frames where the

spectators see women portraits. As can be seen in this scene and in other scenes, the movie helps the construction of an understanding of female spectatorship by reminding the female audience in particular of their position as spectators by conjuring a relation between the characters as spectators in the movie and the spectators of the movie. Though the gaze controlled by the mechanical camera is an obvious symbol of how voyeuristically the male gaze operates, the movie parodies how the male gaze is interrupted in may cases in the movie by focusing on the female presence as the spectator.

Parody as is framed by masquerade introduces diversity to the movie, an artistic production that needs to be uninhibited by any form of monolithical content and tendency. Parody in *Love 'em and Leave 'em* combines distinct perspectives, evincing the failure of established cultural forms of patriarchy. The title of the movie itself becomes a parody of romantic love affairs, as phallocentric definitions of love affairs based on the dominance of men live on inauthenticity of relationships and their disingenuous and oppressive nature, as is clear in Bill's deceit and cheat. In the scene where Mame and her friends witness Bill and Janie's cheat, a child among the guests asks, "I thought it was Mame that was stuck on him" (Bill). Mame, expressing her regret and naivety in believing in Bill's love, says, "'But he isn't the first and won't be the last', 'Love 'em and leave 'em – that's me'". Rejecting the idea of being fooled by Bill, Mame reflects her regret; "No man's going to play me for a fish. Fool 'em and forget 'em". Furthermore, presenting the male gaze as a voyeuristic mechanism in this scene, the movie further re-appropriates the male gaze with a novel and repression-free touch. The gaze Mame controls in this specific scene swaps the male and female roles in spectatorship, and replaces the male gaze with the female one. This exchange introduces the possibility of the female spectatorship and the female gaze to the spectators, reminding them of the dominant controlling and restrictive role of the male gaze. After this moment of recognition of the love between Janie and Bill, Mame, when she says "Fool 'em and forget 'em", shocks Bill in her use of patriarchal discourse that commodifies women as a spectacle or an exchange material, as well.

The recurrent emphasis on deceitful and insincere love affairs attracts the attention of the spectator to the artificial objects or scenes in the movie. The movie's focus on the relation between objectification and mobility is underlined by its use of such objects as the mechanical doll, mannequins, or the persons in the frames who all become animate

replicas of human beings. This conflict between stripping things of life and investment of mobility is further perpetuated in the final scene of romance between Mame and Bill in the masquerade party. Bill apologizes to Mame and takes her to the window display and kisses her again. This final scene of a spectacle of love and spectators is created when a clerk in the costume of a clown says, "Those dummies look almost human". The clerk's remark stands itself out as the final parodical criticism of the attempts that freeze and objectify women. Just like the baby doll that symbolizes the breakdown of the stagnant male gaze, the idea of a collapse between artificiality and authenticity of things including the human and female body enhances the movie's attempts to restore mobility and change to the strictness of the phallocentric male gaze, which ultimately paves the way to construction of female spectatorship. It can be thus argued that *Love 'em and Leave 'em* achieves to break down the system of voyeuristic pleasure with the assistance of a female character. Mame is the heroine of a process from stability to mobility of things displayed. In the scene where she sees through the doorway, she also shatters the stagnancy of both the male gaze and changes her own inactive status as a woman who wants to get married. With her move from a woman who stagnantly waits for her husband-to-be to earn money for marriage to an independent woman who can stand without the help or support of a man, Mame is presented as going through a transformation, a process at the end of which she gains mobility and individuality.

Love 'em and Leave 'em is an attempt to come to terms with the idea of spectatorship from the perspective of objectification, and introduces a new realm for the female spectatorship. The movie itself, with its constantly moving scenes, is able to provoke questions about the patriarchal social formations and patterns of thought reflecting the male gender as the only status for spectatorship. By posing scenes of voyeurism, the movie subverts the male gaze in order to crystallize its criticism of the female body as a pleasure-giving spectacle in phallocentric cultural structures. The movie hence enables its spectators to observe the possibility for the cinema to break through the norms of gender, and evade pressures placed on the female embodiment and spectatorship. *Love 'em and Leave 'em*, with its focus on the parody of the patriarchal constructs of gender and the male gaze, provides the spectator with the chance to observe the female body not as a voyeuristically viewed image but as an entity that is able to disrupt the popular and stereotypical representations of women on the screen.

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