



Spectacular Passions: Cinema, Fantasy, Gay Male Spectatorships

Brett Farmer

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The image of the movie-obsessed gay man is a widely circulating and readily recognizable element of the contemporary cultural landscape. Using psychoanalytic theory as his guide while inflecting it with insights from both film theory and queer theory, Brett Farmer moves beyond this cliché to develop an innovative exploration of gay spectatorship. The result, *Spectacular Passions*, reveals how cinema has been engaged by gay men as a vital forum for “fantasmatic performance”—in this case, the production of specifically queer identities, practices, and pleasures.

Building on the psychoanalytic concept of the fantasmatic, Farmer works to depathologize gay male subjectivity. While discussing such films as *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *The Pirate*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, and *Sunset Boulevard*, and stars ranging from Mae West to Montgomery Clift, Farmer argues that the particularities of gay men’s social and psychic positionings motivate unique receptions of and investments in film. The Hollywood musical, gay camp readings of the extravagant female star, and the explicit homoeroticism of the cinematic male body in gay fanzines are further proof, says Farmer, of how the shifting libidinal profiles of homosexual desire interact with the fantasy scenarios of Hollywood film to produce a range of variable queer meanings.

This fascinating and provocative study makes a significant new contribution to discussions of cinema, spectatorship, and sexuality. As such, it will be welcomed by those in the fields of film theory, queer theory, and cultural studies.

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