Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's argument in "Staring: A Social Relationship" is centered around the idea that staring is an interactive, socially constructed behavior that creates a relationship between the observer and the observed. She posits that staring at people with disabilities is not just a rude or curious act, but a complex, culturally and socially embedded response that helps people negotiate their reactions to perceived differences. This interaction plays a significant role in shaping societal attitudes and norms about disability and difference.

From my perspective, the most interesting point Garland-Thomson makes is about the dual nature of staring. While it often reflects societal prejudices and stereotypes, it also possesses the potential to bridge gaps in understanding and empathy. She suggests that the act of staring, when engaged thoughtfully, can lead to a deeper awareness and appreciation of human diversity. This perspective transforms a typically negative action into an opportunity for social learning and connection, highlighting the intricate dynamics of how we perceive and interact with others in our society.

The ableist gaze refers to the way people with disabilities are often viewed through a lens of skepticism, doubt, or as lesser beings. In "Imagining Malingering," Meadow Jones discusses how this gaze manifests in the disbelief and questioning of her physical pain and disability, suggesting that it's all in her mind or exaggerated. This gaze assumes that if a disability isn't visible or easily understood, it might not be real or serious. In the films we've seen, like "Code of the Freaks" and "Black Sun," this gaze is evident in the portrayal of characters with disabilities, often reducing them to stereotypes or questioning their capabilities. These examples highlight the prevalence of ableist attitudes in media and society, where the authenticity and severity of disabilities are too often unfairly scrutinized.

According to Slava Greenberg, the non-ableist gaze shifts the perspective from skepticism and doubt to one of understanding and acceptance. It involves seeing individuals with disabilities as whole persons, not defined solely by their disability. This gaze recognizes the diversity and complexity of human experiences, including those of disabled individuals, and values their contributions and narratives without prejudice. It's about viewing disability as a natural variation of the human condition, rather than a deficit or an anomaly. This approach fosters inclusivity and empathy, challenging traditional narratives and stereotypes.

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In "Code of the Freaks," the non-ableist gaze is evident in its critique of Hollywood's portrayal of disabled characters. The film dismantles stereotypes by showcasing real experiences of disabled people, countering the traditional, often patronizing or sensationalized cinematic depictions. It challenges viewers to see beyond the usual tropes, inviting a more nuanced understanding of disability.

"Black Sun," on the other hand, offers a non-ableist gaze through its intimate portrayal of the artist's experience with visual impairment. The film immerses viewers in his perspective, emphasizing his artistic vision and resilience rather than focusing solely on his disability. This approach personalizes the experience of disability, moving away from generalizations.

Both films employ different strategies – one through critique and the other through personal narrative – but each effectively shifts the viewer's perception, fostering a deeper empathy and appreciation for the diverse experiences of people with disabilities. These films left a profound impact, challenging my own perceptions and encouraging a more inclusive and understanding viewpoint.