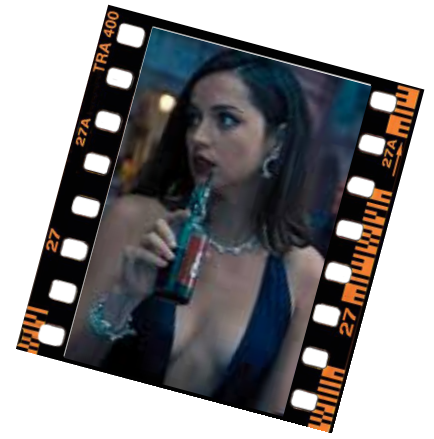


# THE MALE GAZE

MULVEY (1975)



Laura Mulvey is a British feminist film theorist born in 1941. She is best known for her 1975 essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, which introduced the concept of the **male gaze**. Mulvey studied at St Hilda's College, Oxford, and her work draws heavily on psychoanalytic theories, particularly those of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, as well as feminist theory. She revolutionized the way we understand the portrayal of women in media and film, highlighting the gendered dynamics of looking and representation.

## Methodology

Mulvey's research is rooted in textual and visual analysis. She examined classic Hollywood films, particularly those from the 1940s and 1950s, and applied psychoanalytic theory to explore how women were depicted on screen. She argued that mainstream cinema positions women as objects of male pleasure and constructs them through the lens of heterosexual male desire. Mulvey used qualitative analysis of film techniques, such as camera angles, narrative structures, and the portrayal of female characters, to develop her theory.

## Findings

Mulvey argued that films are constructed to satisfy the "male gaze," which operates in three ways:

1. **The gaze of the camera:** Cinematic techniques like close-ups and framing focus on the female body as a source of visual pleasure.
2. **The gaze of the characters:** Male characters within films actively look at and objectify female characters.
3. **The gaze of the audience:** Male viewers are encouraged to identify with the male characters and adopt their perspective of the female body as a passive object.

Mulvey identified two key types of pleasure in watching films:

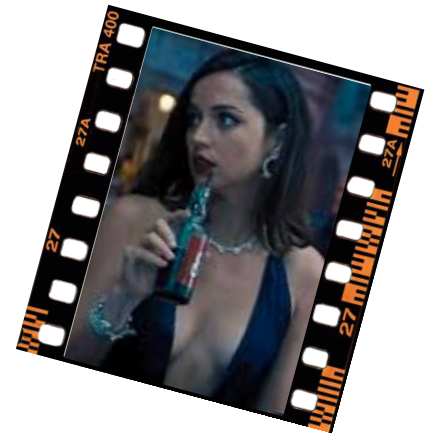
- **Scopophilia:** The pleasure in looking, particularly at an objectified other.
- **Identification:** The pleasure in identifying with the dominant, often male, protagonist.

Women, she argued, are portrayed as passive and powerless, while men are active and in control. This dynamic reinforces patriarchal ideologies and restricts how women are represented in media.



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## Impact of the Male Gaze

Mulvey's theory sparked significant debate and laid the groundwork for feminist film criticism. It highlighted how media reinforces gender inequality by portraying women as objects for male consumption. Her work inspired filmmakers, theorists, and activists to challenge and subvert these portrayals. Today, the concept of the male gaze is used to analyze not only film but also advertising, television, and social media, raising awareness about how visual culture shapes perceptions of gender.



### Knowledge

Who is Laura Mulvey, and what is her main contribution to feminist film theory?

Define the "male gaze" and identify its three components.

### Application

Identify examples of the male gaze in a film, TV show, or advertisement you have seen. How are women represented, and how does this fit into Mulvey's theory?

How might Mulvey's theory apply to social media platforms like Instagram or TikTok?



### Evaluation

How might the male gaze contribute to gender inequality in society?

Do you agree with Mulvey's argument that women are primarily depicted as passive objects in mainstream cinema? Why or why not? Provide examples to support your view.



### Critical Thinking

How could filmmakers challenge or subvert the male gaze in their work?

Mulvey's theory focuses on heterosexual male desire. How might her theory be adapted to account for diversity in gender and sexual orientation?

