

“Visual pleasure and narrative cinema” by Laura Mulvey

First of all, before focusing on the content of a controversial essay such as “Visual pleasure and narrative cinema”, it is considered efficient to take a look at the author who worked on it. In fact, Laura Mulvey is a British feminist film theorist, very much influenced by Freud and Lacan and whose psychoanalytic ideas appeared in this article.

Mainly, she believed that the feminine figure in the classical Hollywood cinema and on screen was considered as an object of desire in order to provide a pleasurable visual experience for men derived and arising from different mental mechanisms, quoting her lines: “there are two distinct modes of the male gaze of this era: “voyeuristic” and “fetishistic”.” She uses a title such as “woman as image, man as bearer of the look” to express her anger towards the incorrect development of a feminine figure which used to be a “dispensable element of a normal narrative story line” and now is connoted as “to-be-looked-at-ness” She eventually suggests to re-shape the “filmic strategies of classical Hollywood with alternative feminist methods”.

The author’s discussion is highlighted by a psychoanalysis theory also called a “political weapon” to demonstrate how the patriarchic subconscious of society shapes our film watching experience and cinema itself. She uses both a semiotic methodology of cinematic means of expression with psychoanalytic analysis of desire structures. More precisely, Laura Mulvey writes about two slightly distinguished mental mechanisms related to pleasure and concern particularly the male subject, yet both forms have been discussed and analyzed by Freud. The first form refers to the predominantly male gaze which enjoys objectifying women into mere objects to be looked at (rather than subjects with their own voice and