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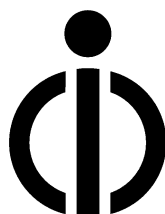
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## **"A Female Gaze?"**

Eva-Maria Jacobsson



CID  
Centre for  
User Oriented IT Design

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**E-mail of author:** [eva-maria@nada.kth.se](mailto:eva-maria@nada.kth.se)

**Reports can be ordered from:**

CID, Centre for User Oriented IT Design

Nada, Dept. Computing Science

KTH, Royal Institute of Technology

S-100 44 Stockholm, Sweden

telephone: + 46 8 790 91 00

fax: + 46 8 790 90 99

e-mail: [cid@nada.kth.se](mailto:cid@nada.kth.se)

URL: <http://www.nada.kth.se/cid/>

## **ABSTRACT:**

The purpose of this essay is to focus on the following question: In the light of Laura Mulvey's ideas, and the subsequent theory and practice, is it still fair to characterise women as objects of a male gaze?

Movies in general have often been seen as portraying certain roles for men and women and establishing the existence of a male gaze. However, the issue here is whether we could see a reversed definition of the male gaze in contemporary movies - i.e. is there a female gaze?

The following essay has chosen to focus on one movie in particular, "Fatal Attraction", due to its construction of initially challenging the more traditional role of a male gaze. This movie tries to present an altered picture which substitutes the traditional male gaze for a female one, however, it will be shown that this is not really the case.

The brief analysis of the movie "Fatal Attraction" will indicate to us the need for understanding the social construction and the definitions of the male and female gaze in order to understand the production of contemporary movies.

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*"Fatal Attraction is fundamentally a horror film set in yuppie-melodrama-land: its whole structure becomes blindingly clear once you realise that the part usually played by the Thing/ the Blob/ the Bug (the virus) is played by the Single Working Woman, Alex."*  
(Judith Williams, 234)

Hollywood can be seen as a dream factory - a cultural industry, a dynamic of desires (using Donald's terminology, 3). Films can be said to mass-produce daydreams, a form of escapism, but for who? Laura Mulvey sees Hollywood as a monolithic construct, reaffirming the positions and structures of the male psyche. It is the unconscious desires and fears of the patriarchy which determines the narrative. The Women are objectified in the Hollywood movies through unconscious desires, founded in the patriarchal ideology, giving a "male gaze". Mulvey's argument in *"Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"* hinges on the idea that the woman is presented as the object of the male gaze and is thereby rendered passive in the frames of the narrative. In the film-text itself the male look is the gaze on women in a position from the camera, the spectator comes to identify with this male gaze and objectifies the women on the screen. According to Mulvey, and a crucial point of her argument, is that one can talk of three different looks associated with the cinema; the one of the camera (usually controlled by a man, either the director or even the camera man deciding angles and views on the object), the one of the characters looking at each other within the illusion presented on the screen, and the third one is the one of the audience/the spectator, influenced by the previous looks of the camera and the characters. In all of these the woman is the passive receiver of the gaze and the

man is the active spectator of the woman, the one objectifying the woman. Scopophilia (in the use of Freud's definition) is offered by the cinema, the pleasure of being looked at or looking at another person. The woman is taken as an object, subjected to a controlling and curious gaze of the man.

Can the male gaze be reversed, i.e. is there a female gaze? Is it possible to argue for a female gaze in contemporary movies, where the woman would be objectifying the man to a subject of their desires and pleasures of looking? Womens' movements have put inequalities between men and women on the agenda. Women have fought for the right to vote, equal rights in the job market, and for a share of responsibilities in the domestic sphere. This notion has also been acknowledged in cultural production, such as film production, and an issue taken up by feminist film criticism is whether we can be talking about a female gaze or not.

The movie Fatal Attraction is an example, which initially on the surface seems to challenge Mulvey's idea of a male gaze. I want to use this movie, as an example to demonstrate the questioning of Mulvey's argument about the male gaze, but also to propose that these issues may be recuperated at the level of psychoanalytic structure and still valid in film analysis. This is to say that we should not simply equate both possession of the gaze and narrative agency on the part of woman with the dismissal of Mulvey's argument. Both gaze and agency need to be located in terms of psychoanalytic structure. The argument of, what one may call, the reaffirming of the male gaze, will be backed up by a discussion of the general attitude towards the view of the single working woman, an

independent and strong woman who can be seen as a threat towards men, "malehood" and the unconscious and conscious formation and maintenance of patriarchy. One way of maintaining the patriarchal social structure and dominance could be by suppressing the feeling of freedom and liberation amongst women. This can be done by implanting a notion that with the increased "power" of women a depression will follow, due to the facts of not being married, not being able to find a man, not having children (the biological clock ticking faster, and soon striking for the last time) and all the other problems which might follow the turn, away from the traditional patriarchal society. These notions and theories, however, should perhaps merely be seen as the patriarchal ideologies' way of maintaining the set structure of society, and not as a true and verified development. The mens' unconscious desire to keep the system as it is and to do this at all levels and by all possible means, is maintained for example in the use of Hollywood movies. Fatal Attraction provides us initially with a demonstration of a possible female gaze but is also an example of how the audiences preferences and desires forces the film text to be altered into the more traditional male gaze. Furthermore, the movie can be seen as an example of portraying the liberated woman as a frustrated, unhappy individual, in need of "traditional" values, i.e. the norms imposed onto them by male ideology.

The plot in the movie starts with showing a happy family together, the Gallaghers'. Dan Gallagher (Michael Douglas) is a happily married attorney in New York, with a "adorable" daughter of five. His wife Beth (Anne Archer) and

daughter Ellen (Ellen Hamilton Latzen) leaves for the country over a weekend and that is when the passion with Alex Forrest (Glenn Close) begins. Alex Forrest is an editor at a publishing company, successful but unmarried. They meet briefly, for the first time at a party which Dan is attending, accompanied by his wife. They meet again during the weekend at a business meeting, and become sexually involved. For Dan, it is a spur of the moment thing, a one night stand more or less, supposed to lead to nothing further. For Alex however, the affair takes another turn. It is much more serious for her, she says she loves him, and after Dan repeatedly tries to end the affair she cuts her wrists to make him stay, and a few weeks later also tells him that she is pregnant with his child. However, as Dan still refuses to continue their relationship, Alex becomes more and more desperate and turns into a neurotic and hysteric person who is prepared to try, or to do, everything to get what she wants. She pours acid over his car, she follows him home and manages to get into his apartment by pretending she is a prospective purchaser for their apartment. She continuously calls and one day when the family returns home they find Ellen's pet rabbit boiling in a pan on the stove. Alex kidnaps Ellen one day from school, and due to the distress and anxiety Beth crashes her car while searching for her daughter. In spite of reporting Alex to the police, the threat is still there, and when the family returns to their house again Alex shows up this time, determined to kill Beth. The movie ends with Beth saving her family (and herself) by shooting Alex. One shot, in the chest.

Fatal Attraction is a motion picture directed by Adrian Lyne. It was first shown in 1987 in America and caused a lot of attention and reactions. It is based upon a



story by James Dearden and produced by Stanley Jaffe and Sherry Lansing. According to Faludi, Sherry Lansing received the script from Jaffe who had been in touch with Dearden and in the script she saw a possibility to make a feminist movie. A movie, in which the unfaithful husband would be the one to blame for once, not the other woman. She wanted to deliver a movie in which the sympathy would be focused on the other woman, who would be the victim of a man's deeds and where the man would have to face the consequences. But, the production company, Paramount, rejected the idea of the plot and Dearden was persuaded to change the characters so that the man, in spite of being the one committing adultery, became more sympathetic and the woman less (Faludi, 145).

Images presented on the screen are usually women. Men are the bearers of the look, the women are objects of their desires and wishes. The fantasy world presented on the screen is a production of the society and its laws, consciously but also unconsciously. The pleasure in looking has been divided between the active male spectator and the passive female, and the gaze is not only an activity restricted to the audience, but also the situation among the characters in the movie, and present in the camera's view of the actors. In the discussion of defining the male gaze Mulvey is a crucial authority, which is why her central idea needs a closer look.

The ideas of Mulvey claim that with psychoanalysis one can discover how and where "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. ... Psychoanalytic theory is thus appropriated here as a political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form." (Mulvey, 14). And further "...psychoanalytic theory as it now stands can at least advance our understanding of the status quo, of the patriarchal order in which we are caught." (Mulvey, 15). The unconscious forms the way we see and look, and how to find pleasure in this "seeing" and "looking", is formed by the dominant order in society. Mulvey argues that the determination of the erotic was coded into the language of the dominant patriarchal order. The scopophilic cinematic pleasure is taking the woman as an object and subjecting her to a controlling and curious gaze, the male gaze. Scopophilia arises from the pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight. Somewhat contradictory, the cinema also develops scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect, the fascination of the film image for the spectator. "Curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world." (Mulvey, 17). An identification with the image seen. This presents a dichotomy where the first is a function of the sexual instincts while the second of ego libido. It is further argued by Mulvey that "During its history, the cinema seems to have evolved a particular illusion of reality in which this contradiction between libido and ego has found a beautifully complementary fantasy world. In reality the fantasy world of the screen is subject to the law which produces it. ... Desire, born with language, allows the possibility of transcending the instinctual and the imaginary, but its point of

reference continually returns to the traumatic moment of its birth: the castration complex. Hence, the look, pleasurable in form can be threatening in content, and its woman as representation/image that crystallises this paradox." (Mulvey, 18-19).

Is the dominant order perhaps changing from the creation of a male gaze to suggesting a female gaze in the productions of cinema? Can there be a movie where the man is portrayed as the object of the female desire, where the man would be sexually objectified? Mulvey argues that: "According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like." (Mulvey, 20). Is this why a movie like Fatal Attraction introduces the possibility of a female gaze and then deserts it for a male gaze?

As previously mentioned the motion picture begins with showing the idyllic image of the happily married couple, at home, with their daughter. They attend with friends a party and this is where Dan for the first time meets Alex, an attractive, independent successful woman. They chat for a couple of minutes at the bar, before Dan leaves with his wife and friends, and as he leaves Alex is watching him intensely, with desire in her look. She is adopting the masculine traits and the masculine position as a bearer of the gaze. The gaze could be said as being feminine in this scene. The object of desire is not a female character, rather a male, Dan.

In the following scenes the gaze can also be seen as being female. The next occasion when Dan and Alex meet is when Dan's wife and daughter have left him for the weekend to go to the countryside. Dan and Alex meet again and they decide to go to a restaurant. They are having a rather good time and get along very well. There is attraction "in the air" and the fascination with this scene is, that the dominating person is Alex. She is the one who has taken the initiative and who continuous to be the progressive force. As for instance when she seductively looks at Dan and asks him:

- "Are you?"

- "Am I what ?", he replies seemingly surprised.

- "Discrete?", she says with a smile and lets him light her cigarette.

She is in complete control of the situation, she is powerful. She wants him and intends to get him on her premises. The camera is reflecting Dan as a schoolboy, he is being seduced, he is the object of her gaze, of the audience's gaze and an object portrayed by the camera. She also lets him know that she has cancelled her previous date for the evening and asks him if it makes him feel good, a bit ironically. His reply is: - "It doesn't make me feel bad." The dinner continues and suddenly she brings up his wife into the conversation and is told that Beth is gone for the weekend whereby she says:

- "...and you are here with a strange girl being a naughty boy."

- "I don't think having dinner with someone is a crime..."

- "Not yet...", is her reply.

During this whole scene he is portrayed as innocent, aware of what is happening, but initially the object of her looks, her desires and wishes. She is dominating the situation, letting him know what is happening and moving the story forward. Dan is more of a victim in this situation, like an innocent schoolboy almost without guilt. This female domination of the situation continues when she takes him to a club, she seduces him in the elevator and she persuades him the following day to spend some time with her.

So when is the turning point of the gaze? Can one detect a specific turning point from the supposedly female gaze to the male gaze, or is it perhaps a more gradual event? When Dan tries to leave after their day together Alex reacts with fury and is very upset. She is so upset that she slashes her wrists, with the intention that it will make him stay, and so he does. He stays the night sitting by her bed but leaves early the following morning. He comes home and wants to forget about it all, at least pretend that nothing has happened and continue with his happy family life. Is the suicide attempt the turning point from a female gaze to a male one? In spite of making him stay another night, he still leaves her the following morning. Or is the turning point just before that when they are having dinner together and she asks if they can see each other again, and he "suddenly" remembers that he is married? Alex is turning into the passive woman, no longer in control of the situation, whilst Dan is gaining more power over what is happening. He might have been the object from the beginning, but now he has had his fun and wants to return to his family. Alex is maybe not the object of Dan's desire, nor the spectator's, but Beth is instead becoming the objectification of Dan's wishes and desires. At home he gives his

family much more attention than before and one scene in particular can be describing the definite turn to a male gaze. This is when Beth is sitting in front of her mirror, caressing her body with body lotion while Dan is sitting behind her, watching. The camera also follows Beth's moves from an admiring close-up gaze, and the spectator is brought into an identification with the male character, the male gaze. The looks and desires are focused at Beth, the wife and mother. She is the erotic, sexual object of a man's desires and wishes.

The turn to a male gaze is also emphasised by the scene when Alex comes to see Dan at his office. He is in control, he knows what he wants, and as they are passing by Dan's partner Alex is merely objectified as an attractive woman, desired as such by the partner. And the story plot continuous with showing a seemingly completely lonely Alex. She is in her loneliness obtaining a destructive and apathetic behaviour, loosing her self control and self respect. Alex is in this instance turning into a threat to Dan and his family happiness. With her subsequent destructive behaviour she exemplifies the ultimate anxiety and fear for Dan, she is a monstrous threat.

The above description and discussion is an attempt to identify a female gaze within a movie. It is also an example of the "survival" of the male gaze in Hollywood movies. Alex could be said as defining this female gaze through her actions and the movies presentation and package in the initial part. However, this situation in the movie is dealt with, by turning the gaze around, to a more traditional male gaze. The "protection" of the male gaze is done by turning

Alex into a psychotic, monstrous person. She becomes something extraordinary, a threat which has to be dealt with and ultimately disposed of. The ultimate solution in Fatal Attraction is to save Dan's and Beth's marriage and this is possible only by destroying the threat, the object of the anxiety. As argued by Mulvey: in psychoanalytic terms, the female figure puts forward a deeper problem. The woman's lack of a penis implies a threat of castration. The object of the male gaze threatens to evoke its original anxiety and "the male unconscious has two avenues of escape from this castration anxiety: preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object." (Mulvey, 21). The later would be to fetishise the woman and thereby reduce her threat.

Fatal Attraction can be seen as an attempt to bring forward a female protagonist character. The initial purpose was to do exactly this, but due to the negative feedback concerning the initial idea, the story line had to be altered and ended up focusing on the male character, and sympathising with him. The woman is usually presented and displayed as a sexual object for the male desires. Mulvey argues that the woman can be a connotation of "to-be-looked-at-ness". The traditionally display of the woman has functioned on two levels: she has been the erotic object of desire for the male characters within the movie and an object for the audience, the spectator. This objectification is done with the help of the camera. The woman as the object of the gaze is not the one of importance in the story line or carries the story further, but she is important as the one who makes the male character/hero to act the way he does. She provokes fear or love, but

the male figure is the one carrying the story on. The active male character is in control, he makes things happen, and the movie is structured "around a main controlling figure with whom the spectator can identify" (Mulvey, 20). This definition of an active character is questioned in the introductory part of Fatal Attraction. Alex is the active character moving the story forward and making things happen. However, the unconscious awareness of this makes a sway of the gaze necessary. The active female characters career is brief and rather quickly put to an end.

What can this motion picture then tell us about the gaze, is it possible to dismiss a female gaze and if not, why? However, Mulvey's argument only addresses a male gaze in psychoanalytic terms in "*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*". What about the female spectator and can we talk about a construction of a female gaze and how can this then could be described. Laura Mulvey discusses this issue in a later article "*Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' inspired by 'Duel in the Sun'*" in which she brings up lines of thought regarding the female spectator. She talks about how the text and its attendant identifications are affected by a female character occupying the centre of the narrative arena. She concentrates "on films in which a woman central protagonist is shown to be unable to achieve a stable sexual identity, torn between the deep, blue sea of passive femininity and the devil of regressive masculinity." (Mulvey 1981, 12).

To identify with a female gaze could be a mere cross identification with masculinity. The femininity is repressed and the character attracts more



masculine features. Masculinity is the norm, determining the feminine gaze. Alex puts on typical masculine signifiers, the sex roles are reversed. She is independent, powerful, and the one who is determined to get what she wants and making the move at Dan. Alex becomes the one moving the story line forward, the "active" part. The narrative agency has altered to be the narrative of the woman, but only initially. After the first few scenes the story is again gradually moved to the story of the male character. The case of Alex is no longer the main interest, although she is pregnant and suffering psychologically from the whole situation. However, for a while, the story is still the story about Alex, up until her position and the situation becomes merely a revenge from her side, but, the gaze is altered earlier than that from a supposedly female gaze to a male gaze.

Alex is initially the strong, independent, single working woman, who seems rather content with her situation and life. She is the single working woman who has a career and owns her own sexuality and agency. She is performing a behaviour usually relegated to a man, and is described as a woman with potentials, abilities and aggressiveness, which usually are characteristics of male traits. Maybe one could say that she is depicted as a masculine woman. To Freud, Mulvey argues, the word "masculine" is presented as conventional, apparently simply following an established social linguistic practice. The feminine is conceptualised as opposition (passivity) or as similarity (the phallic phase), not as different. This convention is the one structuring most of the narratives and Mulvey outlines that she believes that the female gaze would merely be the gaze of a woman identifying with masculinity. "The masculine

identification, in its phallic aspect, reactivates for her (the female spectator) a phantasy of "action" that correct femininity demands should be repressed. The phantasy "action" can only find expression, its only signifier for a woman, is through the metaphor of masculinity." (Mulvey 1981, 15)

However, these masculine traits are, as the movie continues, taken away from her. Alex is becoming jealous, irrational, and hysteric when Dan leaves her. The capable woman is turned into a crazy hysterical woman. This can perhaps be seen as a defence mechanism on behalf of masculinity and male desires, a defence of the male gaze and the patriarchal ideology. No woman is allowed to attain power over the men. No woman is allowed to be the definer and constructor of a female gaze. To rescue the male gaze, Alex is turned into a monstrous creature, a threat and in essence an anxiety to the male character in the motion picture, which brings us back to Mulvey's concept where the woman is seen as being dangerous. Instead of having Dan face up to the consequences of his conduct, the viewer is swayed to identify and sympathise with him. One could even claim that Alex is turned into a sorceress, an individual in some aspects unexplainable, and a threat to the establishment. Alex does not fit into the system, she does not fit into the "traditional" patriarchal order. She is not a man, nor a woman, since she is lacking the essential traits of a woman; i.e. a husband, a child, a subjectivity defined as an object of the male gaze. Or as Mulvey says about another movie with a female character in the protagonist role, caught in the border line of being male or female; "...her inability to accept correct, married femininity on the one hand, or find a place in a macho world on the other." (Mulvey, 1982, 15). Alex is caught between the two worlds of feminine and masculine traits.

Alex is by their sexual relationship bound to Dan, especially when she becomes pregnant, and this is when her real self, the demon, appears and shows its right face. "Women's bodies must be bound so that the constraints will make the demons come out..." (Cixous & Clément, 11) Alex "realises" what is lacking in her life, she realises that without a husband and children she is nothing. As she states in the movie:

-"I want this child, it has nothing to do with you. I want it whether you want to be a part of it or not ... I am thirty-six years old, it may be my last chance to have a child".

Although this would put forward the notion that she is just as happy without the involvement of Dan, the plot as a whole reveals her needs for Dan to be a part of her life.

Faludi brings out the argument that American women are unhappy because they are too liberated in her book *"Backlash - The War Against the Women"* (the Swedish edition). Their freedom had restrained them of marriage and motherhood. This is one notion one can conclude from the movie Fatal Attraction through the behaviour of Alex. Without a family, there will be no happiness, or, as Darlene Chan expresses it; "Fatal Attraction is the psychotic manifestation of Newsweeks marital studies..." (Faludi, 141). The marital studies mentioned are those, which have brought forward a conclusion that the more liberated and successful you are, the lesser are your chances of getting married. The negative attitude towards the successful, independent woman,

portrayed by Alex, can be seen as an attempt to work against feminism *per se*. The Hollywood movies, such as Fatal Attraction, can be seen as the unconscious and conscious effort to preserve the patriarchal order, a patriarchal ideology. To preserve the male gaze is also to preserve a patriarchal notion of society and by portraying Beth as an object of the male gaze, this is strengthened. She is the object of the male gaze, she is the object of the spectators gaze as well as of the camera. She is depicted as the sexy wife and the mother. Walking around in their apartment half-naked, she is the object of Dan's looks and erotic desires, and she is also a non-threatening individual to the "malehood" and masculinity of Dan. Beth is the "perfect" housewife, she has no career and no wishes to be the dominating force in their family. However, the description of Beth brings us to the issue of the actual finale of Fatal Attraction, where Beth is the final exterminator of the evil force threatening her family. The "reunification" is the most important, and these unconscious rules about the happy marriage and the understanding wife are also facts hindering the development of a female gaze. "...the ultimate single woman is a dead single woman..." (Faludi, 151) Hence, Alex has to die, and preferably by the hand of the "good" force, which is Beth.

A very interesting fact in this motion picture is the construction of the actual ending. The end that has been showed to us at the cinema was not the initial proposal for the finale of this controversial movie. The resolution of the conflict was initially intended to be the suicide of Alex. However, the preview audience did not find this liberating enough, suicide was not a punishment hard enough for Alex and this is when they decided to let Beth be the final liberator. A revenge was needed in the audiences point of view (Faludi, 150). This can be

seen as a reflection of our society. A reflection of our fears and desires, especially connoting the male fears and desires in our social structure. To survive, the male identity and masculinity can be seen as being dependent on the female inferiority, and this is why the woman has yet again to be repressed as a narrative and a female gaze. The motion picture is resolved by the justification of Beth killing Alex. Beth is, for a brief moment, allowed the phallic power, but only to dispose the threat of Alex which signifies the threat and fears of masculinity and patriarchy. In the end the positions of male and female are restored.

Hollywood movies present the consumers with a male gaze, since the dominating will is the one of patriarchal ideology. As Adorno mentions about the culture industry; "The consumers are made to remain what they are: consumers. That is why the culture industry is not the art of the consumer but rather the projection of the will of those in control onto their victims. The automatic self-reproduction of the status quo in its established forms is itself an expression of domination." (Adorno, 160). The unconscious pressure of the social structure demands a male gaze, and is a desire of a male gaze. The fear of changes in society is projected onto the women, and by forcing the women to adapt to the norms and rules they become controllable.

Director Lyne's own comment about professional women, (in Fatal Attraction personified by Alex): "They are sort of pretending or trying to be men, sort of overcompensating for not being men. ... One hears feminists talk, and the past twenty years one hears women talk about fucking men rather than being fucked, to be crass about it. It is kind of unattractive, however liberated and

emancipated it is. It kind of fights the woman as wife, as childbearer. You might have a career and success, but you are not fulfilled as women..." (translated from an interview with Director Lyne in the Swedish edition of Faludi, 149). The patriarchal frame of the movie is clearly present as well as the fears and desires present in the unconscious structures of patriarchal society. To lose the male gaze would be to lose the power and domination of the patriarchy. To allow a complete female gaze would be to undermine it.

Faludi is talking about a "Backlash" - the undeclared war against the women, a war where men consistently are repressing women and men's desire is to again defer the women to the traditional and marginal position of a patriarchal society. The concept of manliness is not defined *per se*, yet it has to be recaptured every day. To do this they have to win over the women. With the present economical recession in society in general, the fear of women can be seen as increasing. The desire to blame someone becomes evident, and the ones on whom to cast the blame can be the women. The unconscious desires to control, to be superior and to be dominant are also revealed in movies such as Fatal Attraction in which the ultimate threat is destroyed and a return to the traditional objectification of the male gaze becomes the final solution. The men turn the success captured by women into the meaning of a defeat. Not to be married, not to have any children is portrayed as a condition where the woman turns into a neurotic, hysteric and insane individuals. "You might be liberated and equal, but you have never been more unhappy..." (Faludi, 11) By making Alex the problem in the movie, the anxieties of the male is reduced.

To conclude: to easily dismiss Mulvey's ideas about the male gaze and its origins is not possible. The use of psychoanalytic theories is still relevant in order to explain and understand the status quo, the patriarchal order in which we are caught. The psychoanalytic theory is also appropriate in demonstrating how the unconscious of patriarchal structure has formed the film narratives and agencies, and how this also becomes a dominating force in preserving the male gaze.

To simply try to codify a male character as an erotic object, or a female character as the gaze becomes difficult due to connotations and codification into the language of the dominant patriarchal order. However, the possibilities of a female gaze are present and the sexual objectification of the male is not to be dismissed, even if Freud argues for a connotation of the word "masculine" as conventional and claims that the feminine cannot be conceptualised as different, rather only as opposition or as similarity, i.e. passivity or the phallic phase. The masculine does not have to be the active, and the feminine the passive, although it might seem relevant in the social structures of today.

The argument has been put forward that the ideas of Mulvey concerning the male gaze are still relevant in today's cinema analysis. Fatal Attraction is a motion picture which initially brings forward a possible female gaze and therefore could be seen as questioning Mulvey's argument of a male gaze. However, as the narrative continues the gaze is swayed to become yet again a male gaze, a defence of the patriarchy and of masculinity. This is conducted by

portraying the force of anxiety, the independent powerful woman, as a hysteric, neurotic and dangerous creature. This essay has been arguing the advantages of Mulvey's definition of the male gaze as a construct dependent of the unconscious desires and fears in the social structure. Fatal Attraction could perhaps have been a movie with a female gaze and a feminist message, but these intentions were suppressed by the social order of men. This exemplifies the fact that we have not yet reached the position in which we can affirm indisputably, the power of the female gaze. Perhaps this will be the case when the present ideology radically changes.



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