

Key words
Male gaze
Sexism
Object

This essay will be talking about the subject of the male gaze and how in the media we are looking through the male gaze my keywords are all a part of the explanation of what the male gaze means. I chose this topic because of my work that was in the exhibition which was of a female form and eyes watching the female form, and this is what the male gaze is about when being a female you are seen as a sexual object for only male pleasure which leads to sexism and misogyny towards women. Why are the women of the world seen as a sexual fantasy in film, art and social media and are women in this society so used to the male gaze that they are also seeing through the same lens, are women really looking through the female gaze or are they looking through the male gaze without knowing. Why are women objectified?

Is the male gaze sexist?

Can men be affected by toxic masculinity?

These are all questions that will be answered.

How do we see the male gaze and where is it mainly seen in the media?

In a article for studiobinder by kim leonard the male gaze is mainly seen "in the context of cinema, it to be a "erotic object"(Leonard,2021) on the screen for men to watch when watching a film women are not show as strong unsexlised women when seen in a film written by a man, they are seen as a "bimbo"(leonard,2021) type character which in my opinion dehumanises women and portrays us as mentally "lack in intelligence"(leonard,2021) and devalue us on screen and in everyday.

women are seen as a "sexual fantasy" (Leonard,2021) in film this can be shown in the way that a female is dressed on screen and in everyday live in a social setting this is implied in the book revisiting the gaze "multi-sensory impressions that a dressed body makes in social life" (p56 sara chong kwan} i chose this quote because as a society we chose to dress in a way to fit in to the gaze that is being looked thought around us as a man driven society it is had to escape the male gaze as the patriarchy ran by men everything in society is ran to put men first we are constantly looking through the lens of male gaze without even knowing.

However the male gaze is not just shown in film and the patriarchy it is seen in art that has influenced their lives for centuries. Art is all around us from galleries to the everyday world around us. " i am a woman, not an exhibit" (iris whittle) when going to a gallery such as the tate britain you are surrounded by work painted by male artist of women that are painted naked or posed in sexulized way this leds me to one of the famous paintings by french painter Balthasar Klossowski called Therese dreaming ,

this is a painting that has sparked a lot of controversy in the art world the painting depicted a girl posed as if she is stretching and shows her undergarments under her skirt she is "unaware of her surroundings and lost in thought" ([Metmuseum.org](https://www.metmuseum.org),2019) although this painting is meant to show a young women in her young innocence



however to the public eye this painting is seen as controversial due to the fact that the painting is of a young woman not yet of adulthood which was painted by an adult man which is looked at as a painter sexualising a underage female this then led to the painting being taken out of the museum due to the fact that it promotes and sexualized underage females. The painting can be seen as painted in the male gaze as the girl was posed in a sexual way which can be seen as painted for men to view when it was first shown exhibited in the "heterosexual proved" where women are depicted as sexual objects for the pleasure of the male viewer" (Frisby, 2019) this quote can also connect back to the first paragraph about the depiction of women in film written and directed by men,

Terese dreaming is now being seen as an object we can even go as far to say an "erotic object" (Leonard, 2021) just like seen on screen for instance if we take Lolita the film that was once a book it shows a young girl who is also been seen through the male gaze who also is just living out there young life while also being objectified for their innocence because they fit into the stereotype of the male gaze.

JEREMY
IRONS

MELANIE
GRIFFITH

FRANK
LANGELLA

Lolita



The girl is only thirteen years old. Why is she also presented as a sexual object like Terese all because they were the colour red which in literature is seen as sexual, scandals and dangerous. I think that the male gaze is teaching men to see the female gender as a sexual fantasy and to young of an age which leads to young women to go through trauma at a young age and ruin their perception of life all because of how women and girls have been presented in media for centuries whether it be in a book or a painting on a gallery wall. Terese was put in a gallery to be seen by men who at the time period (1938) would be the main target audience. In the Tate gallery today you would think there would be an equal divide in paintings and artwork that is created

by both all genders but you would be wrong “ only 30% of the art housed in the Tate group of galleries is by women”(Frisby,N) so what does this mean for female artist in the future and will the Tate still be decorated through the lens of the male gaze. When will the female gaze and the feminists be more equal in galleries?

Women can not escape from the male gaze and being made to be objectified even when they have had a statue made of them such as the Molly Malone statue, even a statue has can be violated, the statue has been groped with the main gender groping her being men “ the bronze artwork has been groped so many times over the years that its breasts have become discoloured” (Molly Malone statue ‘violated’ by groping, says campaigner, 2025) what does this say about our society that women get violated in real life and also as a statue because of how we present yourself by the way we dress and even for having body parts. How will we escape objectifying women when we can not even set an example for the younger generation that follows us groping a statue “sets a really bad example to younger generations”(Molly Malone statue violated by groping, says campaigner, 2025) the “ figure of Molly Malone has come to represent part of Dublin's working class community”(Molly Malone statue ‘violated’ by groping, says campaigner, 2025) is this the way that society should treat a woman that represents a whole community just because she has breasts

If we look where the male gaze stems from Sigmund Freud and other neurologists of the time, they took their misogynistic takes on women and used their power to publish a “misogynistic construction of “woman”(Greven,D)p9, is Sigmund Freud one of the oldest versions of toxic masculinity which is the behaviour of a man that thinks through the male gaze so what is the male gaze and why is it bad “it shapes sexist and patriarchal behaviours including abusive or violent treatments of women”(Flood, 2022) if we look back to the first paragraph the patriarch in film was mentioned so not only is toxic masculinity already part of society it is also being fed through films directed by men to push their agenda on to not only the younger generation of men but also women, this is because women think that they have to portray themselves in a sexualised way to get the attention of men being raised by not only the toxic masculinity of the media around them but through the films they watch, the examples of films and TV that I think influenced this is Fight Club, Euphoria, any of the Godfathers, pulp fiction, American Psycho, (500) Days of Summer, Secretary and even old Hollywood films where the woman is portrayed as either a “sexual fantasy” (Leonard,2021) or a “bimbo”(Leonard,2021) who has a “lack in intelligence”(Leonard,2021) such as the films Born to Kill, Room at the Top, Wuthering Heights and many more films in that time.

The male gaze does not just objectify women it also objectifies men from the media telling them they should look ripped and dress a certain way to fit in the other male gaze agenda. When looking at men's magazines there is a movie star image that is being shown a physical type of body that is being shown for men to see and believe that they have to look that way like females we also feel the same way and “present themselves as desirable”(the thinking woman, n.d.) this also leads to both genders creating a “false consciousness”

But the male gaze is not the only gaze out there, there is the female gaze, the female gaze is a big shift away from the male gaze and is a term that is used in media such as in film art and media however its insides are different they are female driven “ the female gaze presupposes the audience to be female” (female Gaze,2022) so instead of a male point of view it is a female point of view, it focuses on the woman's journey and who there are instead of treating them as an object however like its counterpart it also sexualises but instead of a woman it is the desire of the male body, but where did the term female gaze originate from it came from the “film theorist Laura Mulvey's term the male gaze” (female Gaze,2022) the

female gaze breaks away from the male gaze and shows and lets women “behave and feel”(female Gaze,2022) for example in films such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Ladybird* and *A Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, they all show a woman that is strong but in touch with her emotions and has a personality instead of being a character that is only there to be looked at as a fantasy. The female gaze is not just in film it is also in art and is mainly shown by women creating their experiences in art and show their feminist feelings and self love for their bodies. A woman that expresses herself this way is Tracy Emin she is “unashamedly emotional”(White Cube 2024) her work is mostly about her life and her experiences with men and trauma her other themes are of “love, desire, loss and grief” (White Cube 2024) in many of her paintings depicted a female form that is abstract and then slightly covered with brush strokes I like that she has created her work to celebrate her emotions and to admire her natural form without sexualising herself for the male gaze. Her work looks like a memory and not an object.

In conclusion we have been living in a society driven by the male gaze for centuries through art, film and the patriarchy as much as we can try and go against the male gaze and try to escape it, it is still deeply rooted in our society and media and how we look at ourselves on a daily basis and dress and post even what we read. I also think that as a society we should think about the type of things that we show and teach our younger generation. I also think that as a society we should not look to the media to create a personality and how we should act and dress and instead find in ourselves our own identity that is away from the male gaze and toxic masculinity. I say this for not just women but all genders. I also think that as a whole the male gaze is very damaging and harmful the way we preserve ourselves and is bad for our body image which leads us as a society to become mentally ill and not look after ourselves therefore I hope in the future we start trying to change our patriarchy and society to look less through the male gaze for the benefit of future generations yet to come. I also think it is really interesting to look at films and see if it is seen in a male perspective or a female perspective. Women are not just sexual fantasies that are made for men, they are real and equal to men, they should never be dehumanised, we are not objects, we are not manic pixie dream girls, we are not imagined.

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