

**Aragao, Stephanie**, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, United States

### **Nymphs, Vixens, Damsels...Feminists? Gazing at the Evolving Bond Girl**

The second wave feminist movement of the 1960's and 70's prompted several studies regarding representations of women in popular media. One such study, articulated in Laura Mulvey's 1975 article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* has been at the center of a debate within feminist film critique. Central to this debate is the issue of gaze and in particular, the potential of subject-positioning to empower or disempower women in film. Mulvey posited that the medium of narrative film being deeply embedded in the Hollywood institutional patriarchy renders it virtually impossible to escape the male gaze. However, theorists such as Clare Johnston contend that oppositional reading of film texts can provide insight into means to empower women within popular narrative film through avenues outside of imaging such as dialogical resistance. This article examines these tensions through an iconic film role which spans over forty years - the Bond Girl of the James Bond film franchise - and situates these representations within historical context and within this ongoing debate. Central to Mulvey's thesis is a lamentation regarding the limitations of narrative film to provide agency to the represented female, thereby relegating her to the male gaze and perpetuating her subordination within societal patriarchy. Mulvey's prescriptive is a call for alternative counter cinema as a means to provide women with agency and voice thereby challenging the status quo. Critics have suggested a need to illuminate a more incorporating prescriptive which rather than forward an isolating binary scopic regime that dismisses mainstream cinema, instead recognizes the popular diageic's potential to produce and reinforce positive constructions of women. This paper uncovers several instances within the Bond genre which illuminate a dialogic resistance to the male gaze which the researcher posits constitutes resistance via contradiction. The author forwards that these dialogic contradictions allow for an oppositional reading of the text by spectators, which under the constraints of Mulvean notions of an inescapable gaze, are always necessarily confined to a singular homogenous male-oriented reading.