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Annotated Bibliography

Mulvey, L. (2009) *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* in Braudy, L, Cohen. M 'Film Theory and Criticism' . 7th edition. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 711 to 722.

Laura Mulvey's essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, first published in Screen in 1975, is an essay that explores the pleasure behind Hollywood cinema. In this essay, Mulvey critiques the way women are represented in film, and looks at the implications that this representation has broadly within society. Mulvey examines the psychoanalytic background that is specific to film, exploring techniques employed within the film industry and examining their impact. *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* is widely recognised as a key text in feminist film theory. One strength of her essay in particular is her introduction of the concept of 'the male gaze'. This framework is still widely discussed today, and has shaped conversations in feminist theory around the way the women are represented and perceived in media. Mulvey is also able to draw on a variety of examples from traditional film to support her arguments.

Although the original version of the essay is somewhat dated, this resource is undoubtedly a valuable reference for my thesis research, as in this essay Mulvey introduces a key

concept for discussing women in art: the male gaze. This is a concept from which further research has stemmed, and many artists have drawn on when creating work. By researching and thoroughly understanding this concept I will be able to apply it to and understand the work of artists in more depth.

Best, S. (2020) *Reparative aesthetics : witnessing in contemporary art photography*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

In *Reparative Aesthetics: Witnessing In Contemporary Art Photography* (2016), Susan Best offers a new way of thinking about the role of politically engaged art, as she advocates for a more compassionate approach to making and viewing art. Best explores the concept of the reparative aesthetic, arguing that this style of work aims to engage with trauma and violence in a way that goes beyond simply representing. She argues that contemporary photographers aim to create work that encourages emotional and social healing, that serves as a way for an audience to connect with difficult histories and personal experiences. Best advocates for this style of working, emphasising the importance of creating spaces for collective healing and understanding. Best is able to link theoretical insights with examples to build a strong argument. However, her reliance on specific case studies poses as a potential weakness, as the examples given may not resonate with all audiences. This poses as a challenge to the generalisability of her drawn conclusions.

This source applies to the topic of my thesis, as Best argues that contemporary photography serves as a powerful tool for documenting and advocating for marginalised

identities. This supports my exploration of how visual narratives in photography empower female identity and challenge traditional representations. In addition, Best looks particularly to Martha Rosler's work, critiquing her method to politically motivated art. I believe Best's alternative viewpoint could help me to construct an interesting argument within my thesis, and allow me to explore traditional and more contemporary methods of challenging the representation of women.

Laing, M. (2020) *Picturing the Woman-Child : Fashion, Feminism and the Female Gaze*. First edition. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts.

In this book, Laing explores the intersection of fashion and feminism, paying particular attention to the “woman-child” archetype. Laing's main argument is that contemporary fashion often simultaneously sexualises young girls, whilst presenting them as empowered figures. Drawing on feminist theory to critically examine fashion photography, Laing is able to illustrate how these representations within the fashion industry have the ability to challenge, yet also reinforce, societal norms surrounding femininity, age and sexuality. She discusses the complexities of the female gaze, and how it impacts societal perceptions. Through analysing visual media, Laing is able to construct compelling arguments, which are supported with evidence. Combining feminist theory with these examples allows her to add another layer of depth to her research, and making her work relevant in feminist debates. However, I recognise that in this book Laing focusses on western fashion trends in particular. This acts as a potential weakness, as it limits her arguments and prevents them from being discussed in a global context.

This source will be valuable to my thesis research, as Laing critiques traditional portrayals of women, addressing the concept of the male gaze and its implications in fashion imagery. Laing's research around the female gaze will provide another viewpoint. Moreover, Laing's analysis of fashion photography will help me to explore how contemporary images construct female identity.

McCormack, C (2021) *Women in the Picture: Women, Art and the Power of Looking*. London: Icon Books

In this book, Catherine McCormack critically examines the representation of women in art and visual culture. She explores how societal perceptions both shape, and are shaped by, the ways women are depicted. To support her research and findings, McCormack draws on a mix of historical and contemporary examples, highlighting how the act of looking has been predominantly male dominated, and how this has had implications for female identity, which has consequently been shaped by patriarchal perspectives. McCormack critiques traditional art narratives, highlighting the complex dynamics of gender representation in art whilst emphasising the importance of reclaiming the narrative surrounding female representation. One strength of this book is the way she looks to female artists and how their work has had an impact as they are active participants in their own representation. This has allowed her to construct compelling arguments, which are supported by evidence.

This book seems particularly relevant to my thesis, particularly in terms of examining how visual narratives in contemporary photography explore female identity. McCormack's insights into the historical context of the male gaze links well with another of my sources,

Laura Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975). Looking at Mulvey's initial explanation of the male gaze theory alongside McCormack's insights will allow me to construct well researched and thorough arguments. This connection will enhance my exploration of female representation and empowerment.

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