INTRODUCTION

• Film noir
• Women in film noir
• Crime capers
• Learning Outcome 1: Summarise and communicate understanding of gender theories with regard to a variety of popular culture forms.
• Essay: You could analyse a crime film or drama in relation to gender fluidity (masquerade)
**FILM NOIR**

- Hollywood crime dramas from 40s and 50s
- But difficult to define
  - Dreamlike, strange, erotic, tone, visual style, moral ambivalence
- E.g. *The Maltese Falcon* (1941); *The Big Sleep* (1946)
- Private eye as the main character declined.
- **Traditional femme fatale**
FILM NOIR TRANSFORMED

• Film noir transformed rather than ended

• Modern noirs — Mulholland Drive (2001); Kiss Kiss Bang Bang (2005); Gone Girl (2014)

• Debates about noir
  • Bleak endings, visual style, flashbacks, crime, morally questionable heroes

• Jean-Luc Goddard — Part of French New Wave filmmakers (series noire, film noire)

• Influenced filmmakers such as Scorsese Taxi Driver (1976)
NEO NOIR

• Neo noir – later films often with positive women
• Spectator is seduced as part of power/knowledge structure
• Femme fatale defined by sexuality and relation to men
• Are they destroyed at the end of the film?
• Involves exaggeration/artificiality of femininity
• Femme fatale archetypes in modern films (13.59 mins)
FEMME FATALE IMAGE

• Woman read through the way she looks; men are not
• Women’s dress and demeanour judged
• Femme fatale – light and dark clothing
• Binary of good/bad women – clothing acts as signifier
MASQUERADE

• Women putting on a mask of womanliness
• Disguising masculinity to avoid retribution from men
• Slippage exposed the masquerade
• Femme fatale – changing clothes symbolises her untrustworthiness
• Different images – unstable
CAPER COMEDY

• Subgenre of crime fiction
• Elements of humour, adventure, audacity
• Females don’t fit traditional representations
• Hitchcock
  • Female figures humanised but also punished
  • Hitchcock – To catch a thief (intelligent female, competes with men)
• Caper films
  • Glamorise crime as stylish adventure, compete with fashion, romance and sex
  • Caper films, melded strong independent females with Hepburn like style
  • Caprice (1967);
• Gambit (1966)
• Killing Eve – and femme fatales on TV
MASCULINE REPRESENTATION

• Alienated, anti-social loners
• Existential angst - world is dominated by crime and corruption
• Cannot show emotion
• Seek meaning in activity rather than contemplation
• Become obsessed with femme fatale
• Morally ambiguous
• Neo-noir – masculinity in crisis
SUMMARY

• Femme fatale and clothing symbolises good/bad woman binary
• Independent and intelligent women- but often mainstream closer
• Crime capers and neo film noir
  • Useful for reinforcing Butler’s notion of fluidity of gender (challenging/reinforcing/masquerade)
• Essay question
  • Analysis of one film discussion its representation in relation to fluidity of gender – focusing on masquerade, cross-dressing, film noir, neo noir.
REFERENCES


