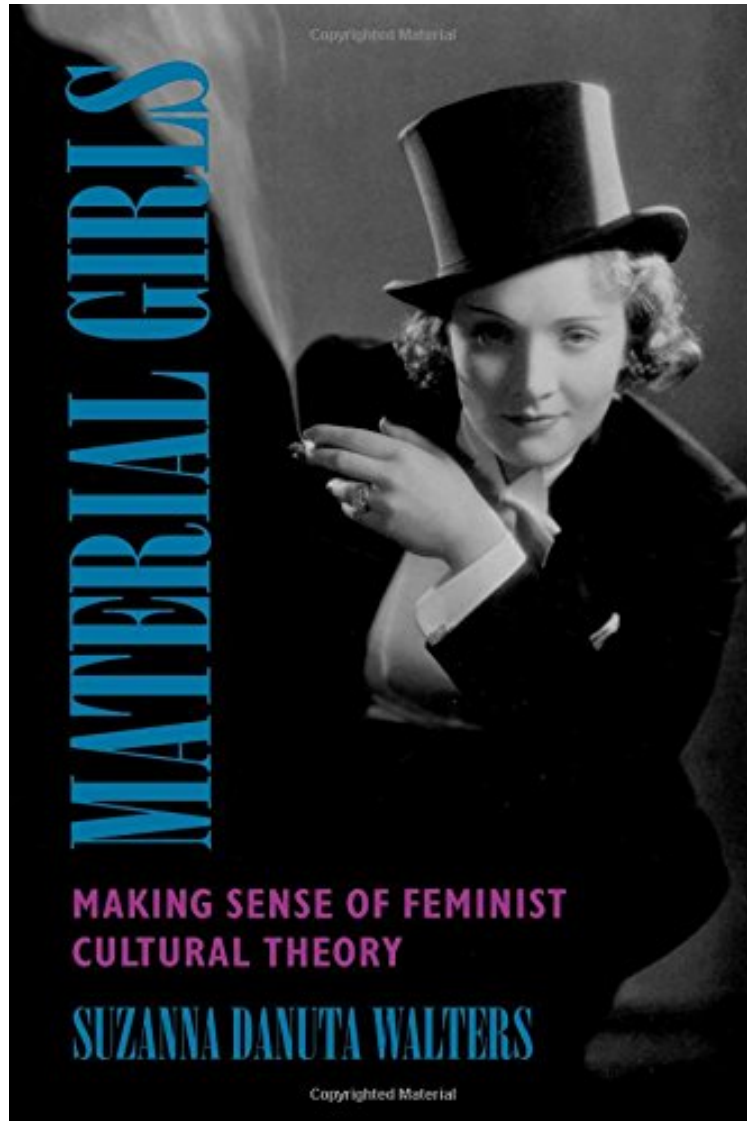


(Read free) Material Girls: Making Sense of Feminist Cultural Theory

Material Girls: Making Sense of Feminist Cultural Theory

Suzanna Danuta Walters

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Suzanna Danuta Walters : Material Girls: Making Sense of Feminist Cultural Theory before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Material Girls: Making Sense of Feminist Cultural Theory:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Wordy, but some interesting ideas By Mel Woods I've included some quotes from each section in order to give you a feel for the book. The book is very wordy and the author often lets others speak for her throughout the book. It's interesting, but wasn't the best book I've read on feminist studies. In the introduction the book claims that "The goal, rather, is threefold: to critically introduce readers to the main concepts

and theoretical frameworks of feminist cultural criticism; to place these concepts and frameworks in the historical context that produced them; and, finally, to present a model of feminist cultural criticism that at once intertextual, multidisciplinary, and deeply invested in the demystification of patriarchal images and the construction of feminist ones." (25)The first chapter (From Images of Women to Woman as Image) looks at the stereotypes involved in the image of what is woman. "...most stereotypes are not neutral; they are deeply embedded in structures of oppression and domination and become prescriptions for behavior and modes of social control." (43)"...that the entire cultural notion of "woman" is itself constructed in and through images rather than somehow "residing" in the images themselves-"woman" is constructed as "a set of meanings which then enter cultural and economic circulation on their own account."" (48)The second chapter (Visual Pressures) looks at the voyeuristic and fetishism of women's image."...claimed that the objectification of women was not an "added on" attraction, but rather endemic to the very structure of image making." (53)"The fragmentation of the female body into parts that should "improved" or "worked on" often results in women having self-hating relationships with their bodies." (56)"...male dominance means that not only do men as a gender have the institutional...power to control the actual production of culture and cultural images..., but they also have the ideological power to control the form and content of the images themselves." (66)The third chapter (Positioning Women) looks at the narrative in which women are placed."..masculine agent often has the same knowledge that we, the audience, do; it is from his point of view, and rarely the woman's, that the story is oriented." (71)"Feminist film critics argue that it is precisely this narrative inconsistency that we should seek out-to elaborate and make visible the cracks in the supposedly air-tight case that is male-dominated imagery." (75)"It is not surprising that genres associated both with a female audience and with "feminine" subject matters...should be found unworthy of critical attention by male cultural critics.."(79-80)In the fourth chapter (You Looking at Me?) the author looks more closely at the female spectator."Because the analyst's desire was somehow to construct a knowledge of the 'other'- or more precisely the other's knowledge- a resort to anthropological or sociological methodologies seemed inevitable." (98-99)"We [women] resist, reinterpret, willfully read against the grain, and reinscribe dominant meanings with our own subversive interpretations." (111)In the fifth chapter (Post-feminism and Popular Culture) the author looks at the backlash against the feminist movement."In addition, this backlash is more clearly antifeminist: it responds directly to the women's movement and often pits one woman against the other (Fatal Attraction, Working Girl, The Hand the Rocks the Cradle)." (139)In the sixth chapter (Material Girls) is the concluding chapter of the book."For if the image so often mystifies and degrades us, our criticism of that same image should not-must not- participate in further mystification." (150)"..up until now, cultural critics have been content to read a text; the point, however, is to write a new one." (152)7 of 14 people found the following review helpful. This book does not live up to its title of "Making Sense"By munchkinsWalters becomes very wordy in her second chapter and continues throught the entire book this way. She has several interesting chapters in which she gives critical interpretations of popular films and television shows, however, they fail to make up for the dullness of the entire book. She is overly critical of previous methods of feminist criticism, while at the same time almost cocky about her own superior viewpoint. In the end, she never actually has a viewpoint of her own, except that someone else should pick up the ball and develop a new feminist methodology. Her wordiness seemed to be nothing more than a cover for a lack of original thought. This book is definately not for the new student of feminism or for the skeptic. There are many other enlightening books on the subject. Unfortunately this is not one of them and it would be terrible for the book to turn off any more people to the subject as it did myself.

Madonna, Murphy Brown, Thelma and Louise: These much-discussed media icons are the starting points of Suzanna Walter's brilliant, much-needed introduction to feminist cultural theory. Accessible yet theoretically sophisticated, up-to-date and entertaining, *Material Girls* acquaints readers with the major theories, debates, and concepts in this new and exciting field. With numerous case studies and illustrations, Walters situates feminist cultural theory against the background of the women's movement and media studies. Using examples from film, television, advertising, and popular discourse, she looks at topics such as the "male gaze," narrative theory, and new work on female "ways of seeing" and spectatorship. Throughout, Walters provides a historically grounded account of representations of women in popular culture while critiquing the dominance of psychoanalytic and postmodern analyses. The first comprehensive guide to the approaches and debates that make up this growing field, *Material Girls* belongs on the shelf of every cultural critic and savvy student today.

From the Inside Flap"Material Girls is both a very accessible and a theoretically sophisticated work. It is highly valuable for graduate and undergraduate courses in women's studies, cultural studies, and sociology of culture courses. And Walters presents her own perspective on feminist cultural studies, making this an important book."Andrea Walsh, Women's Studies Program, Harvard University