

Feminist theory and Duffy's poetry – gaze

Feminist theory developed The Gaze in describing the social power relations between women and men — how men gaze at women; how women gaze at themselves; how women gaze at other women; and the effects of these ways of seeing.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaze>

1. Above is a very simple summary of the feminist theory of 'the gaze'. Using this as a starting point, see what else you can find out about this aspect of feminist theory. Make notes on your findings to share with your group.
2. Consider which novels and plays you have read or seen which have instances of this – think about stories in which women look into mirrors, out of windows or are looked at by others. You might even think of films in which women are watched, men watch women or women watch each other; consider for example, how often there are scenes of women looking in mirrors or men watching a woman through a window. Some examples I've thought of are: *Jane Eyre*; *Rebecca*; *Hedda Gabler*. Once you get started you will probably be able to think of a lot and don't dismiss the images as 'nothing'; can you think of novels, plays or films in which men look in mirrors or watch each other through windows?
3. Now read the following Duffy poems:

'I Remember Me'
'Whoever She Was'
'Standing Female Nude'
'Liar'
'Dream of a Lost Friend'
'In Your Mind'
4. Consider the way these poems can be analysed in terms of the feminist theory of 'the gaze'. Make notes for each one: who is doing the gazing? What is their opinion of who/what they are watching? How do you, as a reader, feel about watching alongside? What is the effect of watching? What do you think Duffy's purpose is in writing in this way? Do you find this writing successful?