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Gaze and Glance: Modernist/Postmodernist Representation of Identity in the Social Landscapes of Henri Cartier-Bresson and Gregory Crewdson.

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Abstract:

This dissertation considers the representation of identity via 'gaze and glance' contrasting the power dynamics of viewing positions in 'humanism' and 'postmodernism'. "The gaze, a term often associated with contemplative slower viewing, and the glance, a momentary captured look, play a crucial role in shaping how we view identity and meaning in photography" (Craig, 2019; Clarke, 2013; Bryson, 1982). Through theoretical frameworks, both the humanist and postmodernist tradition utilise gaze and glance to convey distinct perspectives of identity. Using case studies of Henri Cartier-Bresson (humanism), and Gregory Crewdson (postmodernism), it will unravel the complex way identity is constructed within photographic art. The interplay between humanism and postmodernism navigates the concepts of identity, agency, and perception using-case studies, and comparative analyses, emphasizing the role gaze and glance takes in shaping identity within photographic art, whilst expanding on broader debates that surround humanism and postmodernism in visual culture.

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1. Introduction

Gaze & Glance: Perception, and Identity and Power Dynamics, in Social Landscapes.

"Think of the way a new country is settled. At first there is wilderness, undifferentiated space. A clearing is made in the forest and a few houses are built. Immediately differentiation occurs; on the one side there is wilderness, on the other a small, vulnerable, manmade world. The farmers are keenly aware of their place, which they have created themselves and which they must defend against the incursions of wild nature. To the passer by or visitor, the fields and houses also constitute a well-defined place, obvious to him as he emerges from the forest to the clearing."

(Tuan: 1977 p. 166)

"A division separates the activity of the gaze, prolonged, contemplative,
yet regarding the field with a certain aloofness and disengagement -
from that of a glance, a furtive or sideways look - carrying messages of
hostility, collusion, rebellion and lust."

(Bryson, 1982)

The "two primary modes of seeing, the glance and the gaze," (Casey, 2007) are discussed in relation to the view of the humanist and postmodern photographer. By understanding these different ways of seeing, we can understand how the photographer seeks to create identity within their images. The identity is formed by the way both the photographer and viewer look at the image "its not already there to simply be recorded, it's part of the process of looking" (Hall, 2021)

When a space becomes a place….identity point of view etc.

In the realm of the visual arts, photography holds the unique position of being a medium that captures the real - moments frozen in time, offering a window into human experiences. Central to the discourse surrounding photography is the concept of the gaze, encompassing the dynamics of power, perception, and identity. Viewed through the lens of the camera, a photographer wields the power to shape narratives, influence perception, and explore the intricate details of individual and collective identity. This essay seeks to examine how the gaze and glance operate within the context of photography, explaining their role in influencing perception, and constructing identity.

The Gaze, Power dynamics, Perception and Identity

'Place is not neutral but is imbued with power relations that shape our experiences and interactions within space.' (Hall, 2021)

Photography, like any form of visual representation, contains a natural a power dynamic, where the act of looking itself, becomes a site of negotiation and contestation. Historically, the gaze in photography has often been used by those in positions of authority, to reinforce dominant narratives and perpetuate existing power structures. For example, colonial photographers would employ the gaze to both exotic-ize and objectify their non-Western subjects, reinforcing the colonial hierarchies of superiority and inferiority. A system whereby people were ranked by their social class, whether they owned land, how much money they made, and the jobs they had, and their race.

"The fact that we project "ourselves" into these cultural identities at the same time internalising their meanings and values, making them "part of us", helps to align our subjective feelings with the objective places we occupy in the social cultural world. Identity thus stitches (or, to use a current medical metaphor, "sutures") the subject into the structure. It stabilises both the subjects and the cultural worlds they inhabit, making both reciprocally more unified and predictable" (Hall, 1992: 27)

Photography has the power to shape our perception of the world by framing and interpreting reality through the selective gaze of the photographer. Through composition, framing, and editing, photographers direct the viewer's attention, influencing how images are perceived and interpreted. An example being, photographers using the gaze to draw attention to social injustices and human rights abuses, prompting viewers to confront uncomfortable truths and challenge the prevailing narratives that may surround them.

The gaze in photography can also be used as a tool to create empathy and connection, to foster understanding across the cultural, social, and geographical boundaries. Documentary photographers will often use the gaze to capture moments of human vulnerability and resilience, inviting the viewer to have empathy with the experiences of others and create a sense of solidarity and compassion.

The gaze in photography can also be used to create a site of resistance and subversion, especially for marginalized communities whose identities are often purposefully misrepresented or ignored within the mainstream visual culture. Gender queer photographers, for example, are using the gaze to challenge heteronormative standards and celebrate the diversity of expression within man made landscapes. In reclaiming the gaze and asserting their visibility, marginalized communities affirm their presence and demand recognition within the visual landscape.

The Glance: Capturing Fleeting Moments and Intimacy in Photography

Within photography, amidst deliberate compositions and staged scenes, there exists a realm of fleeting moments and intimate exchanges captured by photographers, the realm of the glance. Unlike the prolonged and deliberate gaze, which often denotes power dynamics and scrutiny, "The gaze that sees is the gaze that dominates." (Foucalt, 1975) (In Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1975), the gaze is developed as an instrument of power within the social dynamics of power relations) the glance is all about ephemeral encounters, it conveys intimacy, spontaneity, and emotional resonance. This chapter aims to explore the significance of the glance in photography, explaining how photographers will use this subtle gesture to evoke a sense of intimacy, imbue images with a feeling of depth, and invite the viewer into a moment of connection and reflection.

In his book "The Decisive Moment," Cartier Bresson describes photography as "a way of capturing the essence of a fleeting moment" (Cartier-Bresson, 1952). Photography is unique in it's ability to freeze moments in time, preserving fleeting gestures and expressions that might otherwise go by unnoticed:

> "the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression."

> (Cartier-Bresson, 1952)

The glance, with it's brevity and spontaneity, captures the essence of these transient moments, inviting the viewer to catch a glimpse of the lives of others and share their experiences.

Henri Cartier-Bresson was renowned for his ability to capture the decisive moment, the fleeting instance when all elements align to create a compelling image. In Cartier--Bresson's "Behind the Gare, Saint-Lazare 1932", a man leaps over a puddle, captured in mid-air, his expression is a mixture of determination and elation. The glance exchanged between the subject and the photographer transcends the confines of the frame, inviting viewers to share in the exhilaration of the moment. In the same way, documentary photographers use the glance to convey the life experiences of their subjects, offering a glimpse into worlds that are often overlooked or marginalized. In Dorothea Lange's haunting photograph 'Migrant Mother 1936' the weary gaze of the mother, coupled with the hidden faces of her children, speaks volumes about the hardships endured by migrant workers during the Great Depression. With this subtle interplay of gaze, Lange manages to capture both

the resilience and dignity of her subject, lifting their stories from a realm of statistics to a realm of real human experience. In contrast to what Cartier-Bresson would call "the decisive moment" what Lange captures is what John Berger would term "the historic moment". "a biographical or historic moment, whose duration is measured not by seconds, but by its relation to a lifetime" (Berger 2009)

FIG 1 - Cartier Bresson - Behind The Gare 1932
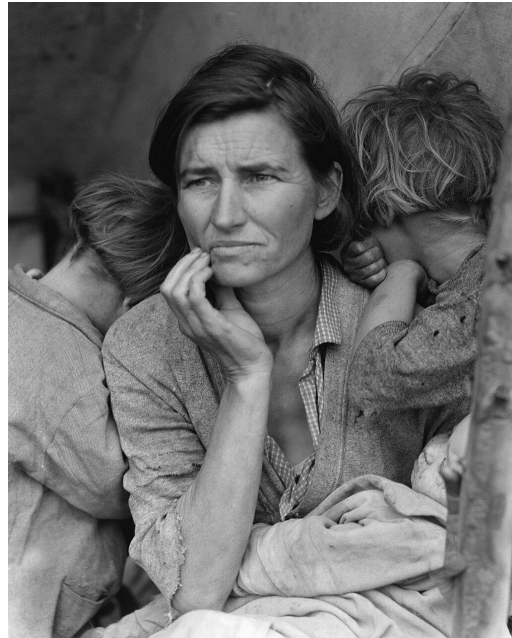
FIG 2 - Lange - Migrant Mother   St Lazare 1936

The Glance and Intimacy:

"A division separates the activity of the gaze, prolonged, contemplative, yet regarding the field with a certain aloofness and disengagement - from that of a glance, a furtive or sideways look - carrying messages of hostility, collusion, rebellion and lust". (Bryson, 1982)

As well as capturing those fleeting moments, the glance can also serve as a conduit for intimacy and connection in photography. In particular, harnessing the power of the glance to forge an emotional connection between subject and viewer, inviting empathy and understanding. With a subtle touch photographers can convey powerful thoughts and emotions within their subjects, creating photographs that resonate deeply on a personal level.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the glance can serve as a powerful tool, capturing fleeting moments and evoking intimacy in photographs. With its ability to convey emotion, foster connection, and invite empathy, the glance provides images with a depth and resonance, inviting the viewer into a moment of shared humanity. Whether it is captured in the hustle and bustle of a

city street or the quiet intimacy of a portrait session, the glance reminds us of the beauty and complexity of the human experience, it invites us to pause, reflect, and connect with the world around us.

Humanism in Photography: Celebrating Subjectivity and Authenticity

Introduction:

Humanism emerged as a guiding principle during the modernist period, a celebration of the inherent dignity and authenticity of the human experience " These were often utopian, and modernism was in general associated with ideal visions of human life and society and a belief in progress"(Tate.org, n.d.) . Entrenched in the philosophy of human-centred values and empathy, photographic humanism transcends simple visual representations to capture an essence of individuality, emotion, and connection. Sam Abell, a humanist landscape photographer writes 'The photographs I make are an invitation to notice the world around us. I seek to reveal moments of beauty and grace that might otherwise go unnoticed." (Abell, 1990)

Humanism and Subjectivity:

At the heart of humanist photography is the deep reverence for subjectivity, and the unique perspectives, experiences, and identities that define every individual. Unlike the "detached observation" that (so-called) objective documentary photographers seek; humanist photographers seek to engage with their subjects on a personal level, looking to understand and celebrate the complexities of their lives. Through the eyes of a subjective photographer the hidden nuances of human existence can be illuminated, capturing moments of joy, resilience,sorrow, and vulnerability with both empathy and compassion, simply by using the correct composition, framing or gestures within the photograph.

One of the defining features of humanism within photography is the emphasis on authenticity, the honest and sincere portrayal of individuals and communities without any artifice or pretence. Humanist photographers avoid sensationalism or voyeurism looking instead for genuine engagement and respect in their subjects' autonomy and agency. By this honouring of the authenticity of their subjects' experiences, humanist photographers create images that resonate with truth and sincerity, leading the viewer to connect with the humanity of those depicted.

FIG 3 - Sebastiao Salgado workers 1996

Photographer Sebastião Salgado exemplifies humanism in photography through his documentary projects, exploring the lives of marginalized communities around the world with obvious empathy and compassion. In his iconic series "Workers. An Archaeology of the Industrial Age" (first published in 1993), and "Genesis,"(first published in 2013), Salgado captures the resilience and dignity of people from diverse cultures and landscapes, celebrating their shared humanity amidst adversity and hardship. Through this intimate portrayal of individuals and communities, Salgado fosters a sense of solidarity, inviting the viewer to confront their own bias and preconceptions.

Humanism and Authenticity:

Authenticity is the cornerstone of humanism in photography, bringing a commitment to honesty, integrity, and sincerity in the portrayal of the human experience. By embracing this authenticity, the humanist photographer creates images that will transcend the constraints of time, and be imbued with a sense of enduring relevance.

One of the hallmarks of authenticity in photography is the ability to evoke a genuine emotional reaction and connection with the viewer, the humanist photographer captures real moments in life as they happen, giving their images a sense of authenticity that will resonate with viewers on a deeply personal level.

"Place is constructed through complex processes of representation, which shape our perceptions and experiences of space." (Hall, 2021).Images, including photographs, moderate our interactions with space, influencing how we perceive and interpret the environments around us. Place identity is constructed through these meanings and associations that are attached to particular spaces.

Photographer Sebastião Salgados iconic image "Desert Hell, Kuwait. 1991" exemplifies the power of authenticity in photography, capturing the raw emotion and resilience of an oil worker attempting to put out an oil field fire, started deliberately by the Iraqi army during

the first Gulf war. (The framing and composition create the impression of a man doggedly proceeding forward into danger). It is an unflinching portrayal of danger and perseverance that has resonated with viewers around the world, sparking empathy and compassion for those affected by both war and environmental disaster. "You must have a big ideological affinity with the subject you will be shooting, because if you don't, you cannot remain sincere and empathetic for long. You must strongly identify with the subject".(Salgado, 2000) Salgado created a timeless image that continues to inspire and provoke reflection to this day.

FIG 4 - Sebastiao Salgado Desert Hell Kuwait 1991

Postmodernism in Photography: Exploring Irony, Deconstruction and Ambiguity

Postmodernism in photography represents a departure from the modernist tradition., It embraces ambiguity, fragmentation, and deconstruction as the central tenets of artistic practice. Rooted in a scepticism of the grand narrative and the rejection of fixed meanings, the postmodernist photographer challenges established conventions and looks to question the nature of reality itself. This chapter aims to explore the concept of postmodernism in photography, and examine how photographers deploy strategies of deconstruction and ambiguity to destabilize the established hierarchies of meaning. Inviting viewers to engage in open-ended interpretation and reflection.

Deconstruction in Postmodernist Photography:

Postmodernist landscape photography is more challenging of the traditional modes of representation, it embraces ambiguity, fragmentation, and deconstruction as central elements of the artistic practice. Guy Debord's theory of the spectacle suggests that contemporary society is characterized by the commodification and fragmentation of space, with images

becoming disconnected from their original contexts and meanings as a "separate pseudo-world that can only be looked at" (Debord, 1967) . In "On Photography (1977)" Susan Sontag observes that postmodernist photographers engage in a form of "image-making" rather than "capturing objective reality, foregrounding the constructed nature of photographic representation".

Deconstruction is the critical examination, making the reader aware of the underlying ideas and structures that shape our understanding of the world. Postmodernist photographers look to disrupt the traditional modes of representation by the fragmentation of images, juxtaposing disparate elements, and subverting the established narratives. Through these acts of deconstruction, the photographer invites viewers to interrogate the artificially constructed nature of reality and challenge the authority of the dominant discourse.

One of the key strategies that is often employed by postmodernist photographers is the appropriation of existing images and iconography, often utilizing a subversive or ironic twist. By re contextualizing familiar images or symbols, photographers disrupt or corrupt their original meanings and invite the viewer to reconsider their significance in whole new contexts. For example, artist Sherrie Levine has rephotographed the iconic works by male artists, such as Walker Evans (Metro Pictures Gallery. "After Walker Evans," January 1, 1981–May 1, 1981.) and Edward Weston, challenging the notions of originality and authorship in photography, and raising questions about authenticity and cultural value.

Postmodernist photographers will also often employ techniques of collage and montage to deconstruct images and create new visual narratives. (A Photomontage usually includes image editing where multiple photographs are cut up and reassembled to form one new image) By the fragmentation and reassembling of disparate elements, photographers disrupt linear narratives and challenge viewers to make sense of the fractured realities depicted in their work. For example, David Hockney's 'Joiner' photographs, (composed of multiple images layered together to create panoramic vistas), destabilize spatial and temporal boundaries, inviting the viewer to explore the dynamic relationship between perception and representation.

FIG 5 - David Hockney - Joiner - Pear blossom Highway 1986

Postmodernist photographers often create playful and enigmatic images that resist easy interpretation by incorporating elements of irony and humour into their work of historicity," a "waning of affect," and "a prevalence of pastiche." (Jameson, 1991)   By juxtaposing incongruous elements or creating absurd situations, photographers can disrupt linear narratives and force viewers to question their usual assumptions about the world. An example being, Cindy Sherman's "Untitled Film Stills". This series of images presents scenes that have been staged to mimic the conventions of Hollywood cinema, thus inviting the viewer to reflect on the constructed nature of gender and identity in popular culture.
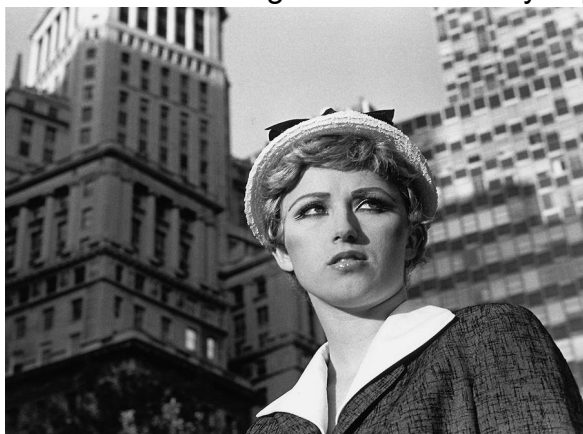
 With acts of deconstruction and clear ambiguity, postmodernist photography encourages viewers to interrogate the usual assumptions about the world and embrace the complex contradictions of contemporary experiences.

FIG 6 - Cindy Sherman – Untitled Film Stills #21, 1978

2. Case Studies

Cartier Bresson: The Decisive Moment: Authenticity and Humanity

> "The photograph is an undeniably powerful medium. Free from the constraints of language, and harnessing the unique power of the visual image, it has the ability to convey the complexity, the intensity, and the diversity of human emotions."
> Cartier Bresson, 1952).

Cartier-Bresson's 'humanist' approach implies that intent and meaning are transparent and that the photograph can transcend geographical, cultural, and social boundaries, affirming the universal aspects of human experience that unite us all. It could be said in retrospect that his depictions employed tropes: Whether capturing the laughter of children at play, the expressions of commuters navigating bustling city streets, or the quiet moments of contemplation in rural landscapes, Cartier-Bresson's images are said to show a sense of shared humanity that transcends language and context. Henri Cartier-Bresson is celebrated for his pioneering work in the field of street photography and his unwavering commitment to humanist ideals. Cartier-Bresson attempted to capture the essence of human experience with empathy and sincerity, creating connections between his viewpoint and his subjects. This chapter seeks to explore Cartier-Bresson's legacy of humanism in photographic imagery, via examination of the use of codes and conventions and how the "decisive moment /glance indicates a level of subjectivity, authenticity, and the 'modernist' assumption that there is a shared humanity of all. "In photography, the smallest thing can be a great subject," (Cartier, Bresson, 1952)

Cartier-Bresson's humanist photography maintains a deep respect for subjectivity, utilizing his perspectives to attempt a more formalist compositional strategy that can move viewers to show the social experiences that define each individual. Rejecting the notion of photography as a detached medium, Cartier-Bresson engaged with his subjects from a relatively short distance seeking to understand and honour their humanity. Candid shots, taken in city streets around the world, would, arguably show unguarded moments of everyday life, to show sincerity and respect.

Threshold Concepts: *Time, Chance* & *Selectivity* in photography

Bresson is known for allegedly avoiding staging scenes or manipulation in favour of genuine encounters and spontaneous gestures, believing that authenticity could only be

achieved by an honest engagement with the world around him. It emphasizes the notion of the indexial

One of Cartier-Bresson's most iconic concepts is the "decisive moment", the fleeting moment in time captured when all the elements align to create a perfect composition. With keen observation and intuitive timing, Cartier-Bresson would argue that only this fleeting glance, captured unawares, can show how "We photographers deal in things which are continually vanishing, and when they have vanished, there is no *contrivance* on earth can make them come back again" (Cartier-Bresson, 1952). This acknowledgment of the fleeting nature of photographic opportunities reinforces the idea that the Decisive Moment is a delicate interplay between not only the photographer's skill but also the spontaneity of life. The notion feeds into the very definitions and building blocks of the medium and what has been termed one of the "Threshold Concepts" (Meyer & Land, 2003) . To analyse the way chance and time is depicted in the form of photography: " represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress. As a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view."

John Suler (2012) offers a critical perspective, suggesting that the concept may oversimplify the complex nature of the social world and how it is depicted. Suler argues that focusing solely on a single moment may neglect the broader context and the interconnectedness of events. Suler contends, "The Decisive Moment, as proposed by Cartier-Bresson, assumes that a single moment can encapsulate the essence of an event. However, life is often more nuanced and multifaceted, requiring a more *comprehensive* approach to photography" (Suler, 2012). Suler's critique invites consideration of the way concepts such as chance, time, selectivity etc. contribute to the *telling* of an unfolding narrative rather than fixating on isolated moments. He advocates for a more constructed, deliberate and contemplative approach, encouraging photographers to explore interpreting how layers of significance exist beyond the simple instantaneous capture of time.

Identity in Cartier-Bresson's Work: Empathy and Connection

Ethical dimensions in representing identity have become increasingly critiqued by several postmodern critics. As Susan Sontag writes in On Photography (1977)

> "To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them that they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed." (Sontag, 1977)

This recognition of the ethical responsibility of photographers shows there is a need to navigate the complex terrain of identity representation using more constructed codes to signal difference, rather than presuming that all subjects in the social landscape represented via photography are all the same; similar values, social conditions and opportunities. Sontag et al alerted the viewer to the idea that a sense of empathy and cultural awareness is not automatically communicated to the viewer and must be questioned.

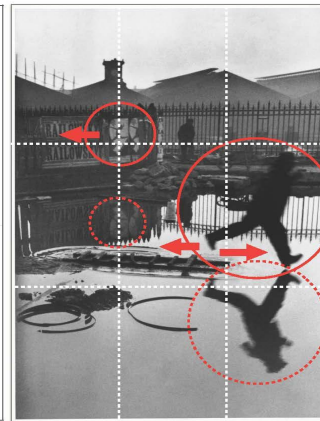## Analysis of Select Works: *Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare* (1932)

Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare (1932) is the quintessential example of Henri Cartier--Bresson's mastery of the decisive moment. The photograph depicts a man leaping over a puddle behind the Gare Saint-Lazare train station in Paris. The man is captured seemingly suspended in mid-air, his reflection visible in the water below. This photograph exemplifies Cartier-Bresson's ability to record spontaneous and fleeting moments with precision and grace. The composition, with the man perfectly positioned within the geometry of the scene, creates a feeling of harmony and balance. Through this image, Cartier-Bresson invites viewers to contemplate the beauty and poetry of everyday life, finding moments of serenity and joy a midst the chaos of the urban environment.

Henri Cartier-Bresson, **Behind the Gare St. Lazare, Paris**, 1932.

FIG 1 – Cartier Bresson - Behind The Gare At St Lazare 1932

VISUAL

Repetition of jumping figures - man & woman on poster (both **reflected**). **Repeated grid pattern** of railings/scaffolding and ladder treads. Strong **contrast** and **wide tonal range** - deep blacks and bright highlights. Some mid tones mainly in the background. **Wide angle lens** - most of the image **in focus**. **Silhouettes** caused by shooting into the light. **Negative space** of puddle in the foreground. **Rule of Thirds** used to organise shapes/forms. **Balance** of jumping figures anchored by static figure in background. **Strong vertical and horizontal lines** creates stability. **Contrast** with frozen **movement** of the jumping figures. **Movement** of ladder and jumping man in opposite directions. Implied movement of acrobat.

TECHNICAL

Image taken with **35mm handheld camera** (Leica) - lightweight, easy to operate, quick response time. **Standard 50mm lens** (closest to the viewpoint of the human eye). **Fast film** (400 ISO?) copes with relatively **low light** - creates grainy image. **Available light** - grey, overcast, early evening? **Shutter speed** (1/125?) captures slight **motion blur** in the jumping man. However, fast enough to prevent the need for a tripod. Image printed to reveal some **shadow detail** and range of tones. **Un-cropped**.

CONTEXTUAL

Cartier-Bresson influenced by **Surrealism** (chance, serendipity, the subconscious, strange juxtapositions, the **marvellous in the everyday**). Trained as a painter. Adopted **35mm cameras** (Leica). Worked as a **photo journalist** - established Magnum agency - and pioneered distinctive style of **candid street photography**. Humanitarian approach. Published '**The Decisive Moment**' (1952) - "To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression." Huge influence on later photographers e.g. Robert Frank

CONCEPTUAL

• Photograph as a "decisive" or significant moment - how does this influence the way the photographer behaves and looks at the world?
• Chance - what role does this play in the creation of all photographic images?
• The city as a type of theatre - pedestrians as actors in a mysterious drama revealed or interpreted by the photographer
• Photographs as historical documents - what can we tell about pre-war Paris from this image?
• Photograph as work of art. Later prints of this image are valued in excess of $20,000

Henri Cartier-Bresson *Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare*, 1932

Gregory Crewdson: The Historic Moment/Postmodernism.

"There is no before and after in the photographs. In that way, any story can be told in a photograph, condensed, and remain elusive in a way. But rather than that being a limitation, I try to make that the meaning of each picture. In other words, I am interested in moments that don't resolve and remain open-ended questions. "

(Crewdson, 2019)

Questioning the fixed definitions of the threshold concepts so beloved of the modernists (time, chance, selectivity), Gregory Crewdson is a prominent figure whose work embodies the ethos of postmodernism. Well known for his meticulously staged 'Tableau' and cinematic scenes, Crewdson seeks to challenge the traditional notion of photographic representation, instead inviting viewers to consider that there is no first order reality as such and instead presents surreal and enigmatic worlds where reality and fiction both converge. This chapter will seek to explore Crewdson's distinctive approach to postmodernist photographic imagery, examining how his elaborate compositions, ambiguity, and use of intertextuality disrupt conventional narratives; provoking deep introspection. (Intertextuality was first used by Julia Kristeva in Word, Dialogue and Novel (1966). It has since come to be seen as the continual exchange and relationship between different 'texts (films, photos, novels) through the interconnections occurring (quotation, parody etc,) between works perceived by the reader/viewer to be related. Of course, this is open to interpretation if the viewer is not aware of the reference then it becomes a moot point.

Staged Realities: Constructing Narratives and Ambiguity

Crewdson's postmodernist practice relies upon his meticulous attention to detail and his mastery of cinematic techniques. Unlike the traditional documentary or street photographer, Crewdson choses to construct elaborate sets and carefully choreograph the scenes within them, deliberately blurring the lines between what is reality and what is fiction. His photographs closely resemble film stills, with the carefully controlled lighting, composition, and mise-en-scène contributing to the creation of a completely immersive yet somehow otherworldly environment.

The mundane suburban landscape is transformed into a site of mystery and intrigue. In *Beneath the Roses*, ordinary scenes are imbued with a sense of foreboding and uncertainty, as if on the edge of a narrative yet to unfold. Through these staged realities, Crewdson challenges viewers to question the nature of perception and reality, inviting them to explore that liminal space that exists between the familiar and the uncanny. (Liminal - "of, relating to, or being an intermediate state, phase, or condition : in-between, transitional." (Merriam-Webster.com, 2024)

Ambiguity is a central feature of Crewdson's postmodernist photography, deliberately leaving open-ended, narrative interpretation unlike the traditional 'picture story' narratives beloved of the Humanist school (see Picture Post etc), which often provide closure and resolution. Images are filled with enigmatic symbols, gestures, and expressions that hint and point to deeper layers of meaning, but they remain tantalizingly elusive. Intertextuality, (the relationship between and borrowing of other 'texts', especially literary ones.) is another staple in Crewdson's postmodernist practice. There are references to iconic works of fiction, such as Edward Hopper's paintings (Tate, n.d.) or Alfred Hitchcock's films as **"In the images of these three artists, the dark side is always gradually revealed. At first sight, everything is normal, but it soon becomes worrying and sometimes even disturbing for the viewer."** (Le Pichon, 2020) teasing the viewer to unravel the intertextual threads and explore the deeper layers of meaning embedded within his creations.

Identity in Crewdson's Work: Fragmentation and Displacement

This postmodern blurring of the boundaries between high and low culture, past and present, allows Crewdson's work to emphasise the interconnectedness of artistic traditions and the fluidity of cultural meaning. As Stuart Hall notes, the way a place is depicted in Crewdson's artificial Tableau emphasizes that "Place is constructed through complex processes of representation, which shape our perceptions and experiences of space." (Hall,

2021). Place identity is constructed through these meanings and associations that are attached to particular spaces, even if, like with Crewdson's work, the place is just a construct in the mind of the photographer.

FIG 7 - Gregory Crewdson - Beneath The Roses Untitled (Summer Rain) 2003 – 2008

3. Comparative Analysis

Gaze and Glance in Humanism versus Postmodernism

Photography, as an art form, serves as a powerful medium through which to explore and interpret the complex relationship between identity and place. Henri Cartier-Bresson and Gregory Crewdson stand as exemplars of two distinct photographic approaches—humanism and postmodernism, respectively. Through their lens, they offer contrasting interpretations of identity of place, reflecting differing philosophies, aesthetics, and cultural contexts. By analysing their techniques, themes, and underlying philosophies, we uncover the rich tapestry of meanings and interpretations they weave. As Hall notes, **"The question of identity is not who am I, but who do I think you think I am?'** (Hall, 2021). Identity is not a singular thing but a multiple construct combining intersecting and opposing discourses, practices and positions. Identity therefore, is an ever-shifting process that is never fully settled.

In humanist photography, the gaze is most often characterized by empathy, connection, and mutual respect between the photographer and the subject. Humanist photographers like Henri Cartier-Bresson employ the gaze to create intimacy and authenticity, capturing moments of real human interaction with sincerity and compassion. This use of the gaze in

humanism is reciprocal, viewers are invited to engage with the subjects on a deeply personal level and empathize with the experiences they are seeing.

In contrast, postmodernist photography subverts this traditional notion of the gaze, instead it embraces ambiguity, fragmentation, and irony. Postmodernist photographers like Gregory Crewdson will employ the glance to create recognisable yet surreal worlds that challenge the perception of the viewer, and seek to provoke introspection. The glance in postmodernism is purposefully fleeting and elusive, inviting the viewer to question the stability of meaning, and the nature of reality itself.

Identity Construction: Stability versus Fluidity

Henri Cartier-Bresson, a pioneer of street photography, is celebrated for his humanistic approach to capturing the essence of place. His photographs evoke a timeless sense of authenticity, reflecting his deep respect for the cultural and social fabric of the environments he documented. In his seminal work "The Decisive Moment," Cartier-Bresson discusses the capture of fleeting instants of human existence, freezing moments of serendipity and spontaneity that he argues, reveal the true character of a place. His photographs are imbued with a sense of immediacy and intimacy, as if the viewer is transported to the very heart of the scene.

FIG 8 - Cartier Bresson - A group of children play amongst rubble. Seville, Spain. 1933

Cartier-Bresson's images often feature human subjects amidst urban landscapes, capturing the rhythm and energy of city life. In 'A group of children play amongst rubble. Seville,

Spain. (1933) a group of children peer through the hole in the wall of a ruined building, their expressions a blend of curiosity and innocence. Set to the backdrop of the anarchist insurrections beginning in January 1933, also known as the January1933 revolution, this photograph not only captures a specific historical and cultural moment but also explores a much broader theme of childhood, a universally relatable aspect of human identity. Cartier-Bresson's camera becomes the bridge between the particular and the universal, showing how cultural identities can enrich our understanding of the human experience. As Hall notes, "Identity is formed at the unstable point where personal lives meet the narrative of history." (Hall 2021), emphasizing that it is performative and dynamic and contingent, suggesting that it emerges where personal experiences and broader historical narratives merge. Place plays a crucial role in the shaping of these narratives, as individuals negotiate their sense of self within specific environments.

Humanist photographers, like Cartier Bresson often depict the construction of identity as stable and cohesive, reflecting the essential qualities and characteristics of the individual or community that is being portrayed. They celebrate the authenticity and uniqueness of their subjects, seeking to capture moments that affirm their dignity and humanity. Identity in humanism is portrayed as being grounded in personal experiences, cultural traditions, and social connections.

In postmodernist photography, identity construction is depicted as something fluid and fragmented, it reflects the complexity and contradiction of contemporary life. Postmodernist photographers like Crewdson challenges our traditional notion of identity by blurring the boundary between what is real and what is fiction, creating images that conjure up a feelings of dislocation and uncertainty. Identity in postmodernism is portrayed as something unpredictable, it is shaped by the shifting of social, cultural, and technological forces.

'The question of identity is not who am I, but who do I think you think I am?' (Hall 2021) This quote challenges the idea that identity is singular and static, emphasizing instead the importance of recognizing and embracing the constant transformations that occur within ourselves, serving as a reminder that any journey of self-discovery and understanding is a lifelong endeavour, requiring us to remain open to growth, change, and new possibilities. Stuart Hall captures the complex, fluid nature of identity and argues that identity is not simply a fixed entity that one can discover and settle into in a permanent way, but rather an ongoing, evolving and dynamic process.

Agency and Authorship in Photographic Practice

Gregory Crewdson, in contrast, adopts a postmodernist approach to photography, deconstructing and reimagining the notion of place in his meticulously staged and beautifully cinematic images. They are authored more like a film director than a journalist or reportage glance. In *Untitled (Ophelia)*, (2001) a woman lies submerged in a pool of water, surrounded by the furnishings of her home. The water, having flooded the floor, acts as a mirror to the lights inside the building, yet at the same time has a somewhat dark and sinister feel, as if it is in the process of swallowing this world. The scene evokes a sense of mystery and melancholy, reminiscent of Shakespeare's tragic character Ophelia. Crewdson's use of dramatic lighting and cinematic framing heightens the emotional intensity of the image, inviting viewers to ponder the deeper meaning behind the scene.

Fig 9 - Gregory Crewdson, *Untitled (Ophelia)*, (2001)

Cartier-Bresson and Crewdson offer a contrasting interpretation of the identity of place through their different approaches to photography. Cartier-Bresson the capturing the authenticity and stability of place, celebrating moments of beauty and grace in the midst of everyday life. His images are grounded in a deep respect for the cultural and social tradi-

tions of the environments he has photographed. He invites the viewer to engage with the lived experiences of the people and places he has encountered.

In contrast, Crewdson challenges traditional notions of identity of place by subverting fixed meanings and embracing ambiguity and uncertainty. Crewdson's work exemplifies the Postmodern style a reflection of the fragmented and unstable nature of contemporary life, where the boundaries between the real and the imagined become increasingly blurred as Susan Sontag stated, "To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and, therefore, like power". (Sontag, 1977). In humanist photography, agency and authorship are most often attributed to the photographer, acting out as a compassionate observer and interpreter of the human experience. The phrase "concerned photographer" was coined by Cornell Capa (1918-2008), it describes those photographers whose work has an impulse to use pictures to both change and educate the world, not just to record it. Humanist photographers like Cartier-Bresson exercise agency with their 'bearing witness' empathetic engagement with the subject, by shaping the narrative and aesthetic of their image with both sensitivity and respect. In postmodernist photography, agency and authorship are much more fluid and contested, they reflect the influence of post-structuralist theories on artistic practice. In many ways, the humanist paradigm harks back to 1930s journalistic tradition of the counting of the documentary impulse (Franklin,) whereas Postmodernist photographers like Crewdson nod to the working methods akin to a film director, traditional notions of authorship are via assimilating elements of appropriation, intertextuality, and collaboration within their work as "exhibit certain recurring characteristics of style, which serve as his signature"." (Sarris, 1962) . In postmodernism, the agency is distributed via multiple voices and perspectives, which all contribute to the creation and interpretation of the image.

Interplay: Tradition and Innovation

In humanist photography, there is an interplay of tradition and innovation that is characterized by a reverence for the past and a commitment to the *presumed* timeless values of empathy, authenticity, and connection. Humanist photographers like Cartier-Bresson draw inspiration from the established artistic traditions, while embracing new technologies and techniques to express their vision. In postmodernist photography, this interplay of tradition and innovation is more characterized by the spirits of experimentation and subversion; established norms and conventions must be challenged. Postmodernist photographers like Crewdson can be seen to push the boundaries of traditional photographic practice by

blending in elements of photography, cinema, and performance art, creating images that are immersive and thought-provoking. The interplay of tradition and innovation within post-modernism is revolutionary, with the artists looking to disrupt the established hierarchy and explore new models of expression.

Cartier-Bresson's Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare and Crewdson's Beneath the Roses offer contrasting visions of photographic imagery, yet both exemplify the power of photography to capture moments of beauty, mystery, and transcendence. Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare Cartier-Bresson celebrates the spontaneity and serendipity of the moment, capturing a fleeting instance of grace and harmony within the normal sprawl of the urban environment. The photograph invites viewers to contemplate the beauty that can be found within every-day life and to find moments that lift us out of the mundane. In contrast, Crewdson's Be-neath the Roses presents a world that is familiar yet uncanny, it invites viewers to explore subconscious and confront strange mysteries of the human psyche.

FIG 10 Gregory Crewdson. Untitled (The Father) Beneath The Roses (2007)

.We are left with the notion that Cartier Bresson creates images that invite us to Recog-nise the existence of an indexical reality of an event that occurred at some point which evidenced the social identities of the everyday moments; whereas Crewdson constructs a fictional identity used as material to recreate or direct the "actor" to perform a something that would have occurred naturally, if the photographer been there to 'witness' it. Staged-narrative 'tableau' photography is used to re-create documentary depictions as a tool to comment on the process of photographic representation itself.

Part 4: Conclusions

"I begin by not photographing. If I see something on the street I don't
photograph it. So I could be looking and hunting for things but I just
don't photograph them. It's only a small difference really. The actual
event disappears as a photograph. It vanishes as a potential
photograph, it doesn't happen; but it doesn't disappear because I'm
the photographer. So therefore what I do with it is still photography, it's
part of my process and so I do remember it. Then you just deal with
what memory is all about. The reconstruction is a transformation that
leads to something faithful."   (Wall, 2010)

Authenticity to Pastiche

The glance of snapshots such as Cartier Bresson can serve as a powerful tool, capturing
fleeting moments and evoking intimacy in photographs. With its ability to suggest emotion-
al states and invite empathy, the glance invites the viewer into a moment of shared hu-
manity. It invites us to pause, reflect, and connect with the world around us. *The gaze* of a
slower, more constructed Tableau, plays a central role in the shaping of power relations, it
influences perception, and the construction of identity. As a post-modern visual representa-
tion, photography has the power to challenge and change the dominant narratives and to
amplify marginalized voices. By critically examining the gaze in photography, we gain a
deeper insight into the complexities of human experience, and the ways in which photo-
graphic codes translate the appearance, gestures and dress of *the real* into *images* which
shape our understanding of the world and ourselves. Crewdson's photographs are cine-
matic tableaus that tear down the walls between the real and the imagined, inviting view-
ers into enigmatic worlds where meaning is fluid and interpretations are varied. In doing
so, Crewdson reinforces the continuing relevance of postmodernist principles in contem-
porary photographic practice, challenging viewers to question their assumptions and em-
brace the ambiguity and uncertainty of the world around them. 'The meanings of place are
not fixed but are continually negotiated and contested within diverse social and cultural
contexts.' (Hall, 2021). The identity of a place is shaped by a range of factors, including
cultural, social, and political influences, and is therefore open to interpretation and contest-
ation at any given time.

Throughout this study, we have explored the concepts of identity of place in humanism and
postmodernism through the photographic works of Henri Cartier-Bresson and Gregory
Crewdson. In humanism, exemplified by Cartier-Bresson, the identity of place is portrayed

as a stable and grounded 'real' thing, it is rooted in the lived experience and cultural tradition of the individual and community depicted within photographs. Cartier-Bresson's images commemorate the authenticity and uniqueness of specific locations, the moments captured resonating with the essence of a particular place and time, yet still managing to hold relevance in the modern world. As Bresson elucidates: "It is through living that we discover ourselves, at the same time as we discover the world around us" (cartier -Bresson, 1952). In contrast, postmodernism, exemplified by Crewdson, assaults the traditional notions of identity of place by subverting fixed meanings and enshrining ambiguity and uncertainty. Crewdson's images depict places that are recognisable yet uncanny, blurring the lines between reality and the fictitious; inviting the viewer to question their beliefs about the nature of place and identity. Through careful staging and dramatic lighting, Crewdson creates a world that is both immersive and enigmatic, to challenge the viewer to explore the complex human experience of the fluidity of identity. Through the choices of framing, subject matter, composition, and editing, photographers can convey their perspectives with the world and showcase self-reflection and self-discovery. By capturing images that resonate with them, individuals can gain a better understanding of themselves and their place in the world. This process of self-exploration and expression through photography can lead to a deeper sense of self-awareness and confidence. Photography has the power to not only capture moments in time but it can also provide individuals with a means to reflect on their past, present, and future selves. Sally Mann wrote "Photographs open doors into the past but they also allow a look into the future." (Mann, 2015).

Implications for Photographic Practice and Criticism

This study highlights the importance of considering the cultural, historical, and social contexts in which photographs are produced and consumed as images are presented to be interpreted. By thinking about the complexities involved in place and identity, photographers can create images that will resonate with viewers on a deeper level and enable a richer understanding of society around us. For critics and scholars, this study underlines the importance of chosen visual research methodology and a multidisciplinary approach to the analysis of photographic imagery. By using an analysis of the way photographic codes build a rhetorical argument via differing choices shows the implications images have in our understanding of place and identity. Henri Cartier-Bresson and Gregory Crewdson offer two distinct yet equally compelling interpretations of identity of place through their photographic works. Cartier-Bresson's humanistic approach celebrates the authenticity and stability of a place. Crewdson's postmodernist approach, on the other hand, confronts traditional notions of identity of place by embracing and inviting viewers via construction similar to that of a dramatic cinema. Even though their approaches differ, Cartier-Bresson and

Crewdson both highlight the rich and multifaceted nature of identity, inviting viewers to explore the complexities of human experience and fluid identity that exist in an ever changing world. Their photographic work serves as a poignant reminder that photography has the power to evoke emotion, provoke thought, and question our perception, and it can offer insight into the ways in which we understand and interpret the places we inhabit.

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Images

FIG 1 Henri Cartier Bresson. Behind The Gare, St Lazare (1932)

FIG 2 Dorothea Lange. Migrant Mother (1936)

FIG 3 Sebastiao Salgado. Workers (1996)

FIG 4 Sebastiao Salgado. Desert Hell, Kuwait (1991)

FIG 5 David Hockney. Untitled Joiner (Pearl Blossom Highway) (1986)

FIG 6 Cindy Sherman. Untitled Film Stills #21 (1978)

FIG 7 Gregory Crewdson. Beneath The Roses Untitled (Summer Rain) (2003 - 2008)

FIG 8 Cartier Bresson. A group of children play amongst rubble. Seville, Spain. (1933)

FIG 9 Gregory Crewdson. Untitled (Ophelia) Beneath The Roses (2007)

FIG 10 Gregory Crewdson. Untitled (The Father) Beneath The Roses (2007)

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