

Some Basic Principles of Film Theory

Gender & Technoculture – WMST 320

subjectivity, a subject's (individual's) personal perspective, feelings, beliefs, desires or discovery, as opposed to those made from an independent, objective, point of view

sexuality, the erotic as it is experienced through the body and the mind, inflected and constrained by cultural meanings and social context, historically and culturally based as well as physiologically mediated

diegetic, diegesis, visual or auditory elements that are part of the filmic or narrated world and often experienced by the actors

extra-diegetic, visual or auditory elements that are not a part of the filmic world but are experienced by the spectator—weighs heavy with meaning (think “Jaws” music!) Overrides diegetic meanings. Powerful!

The Unconscious, as theorized by Freud and Lacan, a reservoir of thoughts unavailable to the conscious mind. The contents of the unconscious are those things that are forbidden, censored, or otherwise socially unacceptable. Thought to be inaccessible to conscious thought, Freud, among others, theorized that these ideas influenced the conscious world of the subject particularly through dreams, slips of the tongue, humor and desire.

scopophilia, pleasure derived from looking. This pleasure may be sexual, rooted in the drive to control or master, or by sadistic (ref the Marquis de Sade) impulses.

spectator>>infantilization>>Lacan's “mirror stage”

- inauguration of “self”
- original loss (Holbein image pg. 129)
- entrance in to the Symbolic
- Mirror Stage maps on to the spectator's position

The Filmic Gaze

- Camera movement and focus determined by a single perspective (psychological, sexual, class-based, racial, linguistic...etc.)
- Identification with a particular subject location is demanded by way of various camera techniques, including focus and especially through the “reverse shot”
- Viewer most often takes up the subject location (subjectivity) of the hero, including his desires, social location and capabilities
- According to Laura Mulvey, much of main-stream cinema positions its ideal viewer as hetero, masculine, white, thereby disprivileging other subject locations

desire, a state of *lack*, or “castration”—the feeling of wanting...