

Chapter 3

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MODERNITY

Modernity- refers to the historical period during which a broad set of economic and social structures took shape. Including industrialization, economic class system and capitalist bureaucracy

Saw ideological shifts such as scientific reasoning, economic growth through investment into science.

Modernity is divided into 3 types: Early Modern, classical modernity, and high modernism.

Early Modernity begins - Sixteenth century Italian artists built upon ideas of classical antiquity this revival was the source of the Italian Renaissance (a period in which Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo) worked

The juxtaposition of forms of culture, scientific and artistic, from different eras, is a reminder that from the Renaissance to modernity, ideologies about knowledge and progress informed both art and science.

Classical modernity is associated, in its beginnings, with the French Revolution and the Enlightenment, a period of intensive focus on the idea of human progress; the harnessing of scientific knowledge to liberal humanist notions of individual rights; the linking of technological advancement to industrial urbanization; the rise of industrial commodity culture; and mass media forms such as newspaper, the telegraph and photographic reproduction.

Late modernity is associated with the culmination and disintegration of most of the European colonial empires, the rise of cinema, and the rise of modernist art and intellectual movements.

Modernism is an artistic, literary, and scientific movement, not a synonym for modernity.

Most agree that the economic and social shifts of modernity peaked in the mid-to-late 19th century with the height of colonialism, with the spread of industrialized science and technology, movement of Western populations, and national media cultures.

Cultural theorist Walter Dignolo- "colonialism is modernity's darker side" (p.91)

- industrial countries bringing new tech to countries seemingly out of purely humanitarian efforts, but resulting in paternalism
- restrictions based on supposed best interest of subordinates

Workers sought escape in a new leisure culture that included movie theatres designed for the mass consumption of cheap amusements.

Workers could not claim ownership in creation of mass-produced goods, but also were unable to afford the goods that they produced (p92)

New architectural forms including tenements houses were created to meet the demand of growing population

During modernity, industrialization and consumption were viewed as signs of progress, not environmental problems.

Karl Marx criticized industrial capitalism for its economic exploitation and social alienation of workers, but he did not predict the impact it would have on our ecosystem.

Nineteenth century life was organized around industrial growth. People moved from agricultural regions to cities, travelling on modern mass transit systems and working and living in crowded spaces. Structures were also devoted to commerce.

Industrialization and consumerism - the changing design of the modern city was integral to the emergence of a society organized around consumption.

New York and Chicago skylines are architectural symbols erected during late modernity.

Some skyscrapers were designed to reference the machines of the urban factories.

Structures devoted entirely to commerce

- Walter Benjamin- (Paris is) a city transitioning to a "culture of consumption and leisure"
- designs of the modern city were centered around their consumerist society
- seeing items in store windows made people desire mass produced goods

The Crystal Palace was designed for looking and being seen. The largest glass structure of its era. Tony Bennett notes that *"one of the architectural innovations of the Crystal Palace consisted in the arrangement of relations between the public and exhibits so that, while everyone could see, there were also vantage points from which everyone could be seen, thus combining the functions of spectacle and surveillance."*

Magnate Walter Chrysler commissioned New York's Chrysler building, the tallest in the world when it was completed in 1930. The building is an icon of Art Deco- lavish style decorations with eclectic motifs. Architect William Van Alen designed the Chrysler building to reflect modernity's excitement about automotive industrial design. The building's famous crown looks like the Chrysler hood ornament and each of its curves a windowed hubcap.

Modern Skyscrapers turned the city into a place where privileged residents and visitors themselves could partake in the view from above.

De Certeau suggested that to truly know urban life, one must encounter it from a standpoint on the street and not just up above, a removed position he associated with planners and bureaucrats.

Bourke-White is also renowned for her documentation of workers engaging with technology in new ways, like shots of women using welding equipment on a WW2 munitions production line. Many of her photos reveal how workers' bodies became enmeshed with the machines they operate. These can be interpreted through Marx's notions of alienation.

Photographers take risks to document change (p96)

MODERNISM

Modernism - a group of styles and movements in art, architecture, literature and culture.
Intensive transformation of visual technologies in the arts.

Modernity (the era of industrial expansion). Modernism (the art and style movement)

Clement Greenberg described modernism as *'the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence.'*

Modernist art movements included; Cubism, Impressionism, Constructivism, and Futurism. They all broke with previous techniques and styles, aiming to match form and method to the ethos of progress and innovation that drove industry and science.

- believed work should be innovative, experimental, and should introduce new thought while upholding "universal truths" (98)

Vladimir Tatlin- monument to the Third International

- design embodied the ideologies/aspirations of the new Soviet state
- news/mass media tech is one of 3 main areas of their government and of the actual building, where it would have been located at the base

Modernist architects embraced form and function, rejecting what they regarded as bourgeois tendency toward embellishment.

After WWI the architect Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus, to design housing for the new German citizen of the interwar period.

Bauhaus artists and designers were invited to take up residence alongside one another to promote the flow of ideas among art, craft and industry.

Modernist artists and writers critiqued modernity's devotion to truth and progress and its ideals of pure, universal design as a means to human betterment.

Keen appreciation of function

- cesca chair by Marcel Breuer
- "I considered such polished and curved lines not only symbolic of our modern technology but actually to be technology" (99)
- now sells for over \$1,000, isn't for the working class anymore
- *"owning mid-century function forward design...now often reflects nostalgia for modernity's optimism about industrial technology in human progress"*

Artists, filmmakers, and writers responded to modernity's new industrial culture through reflexive irony, criticism and even humor.

Modern Times featuring Charlie Chaplin uses humor to critique the industrial workplace's inhumanity; by extracting his or her labor, the factory destroys the autonomous individual but it also produces a new kind of human subject, one who is inextricable from the capitalist machine.

THE CONCEPT OF THE MODERN SUBJECT

In the 17th century, Descartes turned to the sciences and mathematics to establish rational certainty about the world and nature. He emphasized the importance of using measurement tools to gain objective knowledge because he believed that the embodiment of sensory perception and empirical observation are not reliable means to knowing the physical world.

Representation was key.

We know the world by representing it in ideas, not by experiencing it empirically through our senses.

His concept of the subject was the basis of the Enlightenment notion of individual as a conscious, self-knowing, unified entity with the rights and freedom to think and act autonomously.

Sigmund Freud argued that the subject is governed in part by an unconscious, the motivational aspect of the psyche that is held in check by the consciousness. We are not fully aware of the urges and desires that motivate us.

Michel Foucault proposed that the human subject does not preexist discourses and practices but is produced through them.

Jacques Lacan critiqued the idea of the human subject as a unitary entity. The human becomes a subject (develops a stable ego) during a self-recognition period in early development.

Mirror stage- decisive turning point in self-identity - growing baby comes to recognize itself in a mirror image, which may be the eyes of another.

SPECTATORSHIP AND THE GAZE

Looking has been linked to knowing

By late modernity looking was understood to be enmeshed with other senses (hearing, touching)

Looking is a complex interaction that often involves a technology on or through which we look (mirror, screen, page, billboard)

Looking involves the cultural, national, and institutional contexts in which we look, and the world views through which we understand what we see.

The *field of gaze* includes objects, technologies, and built and natural environments, as well as other people, who are either present or those we imagine to have looked before at the same image elsewhere.

Spectator - the subject position of the individual who looks

Spectatorship - the condition of looking

Spectator's gaze - constituted through a relationship between the subject who looks and people, institutions, and objects in the world; the objects we contemplate also may be described as the source of something called *the gaze*.

Gaze is sustained, look intently.

Key concepts in visual theory;

- The roles of the unconscious and desire in viewing practices
- The role of looking in the formation of the human subject or the self
- The ways in which looking is always a relational activity

The concept of the spectator is not about actual individuals and how they respond to a particular visual text. Rather, about how a particular subject position is created by a visual text and its field of looking, which are occupied by specific individuals.

We consider the ways that an image invites certain responses from a particular category of viewer who identifies as masculine or feminine, political, religious, national category.

The specific field of activity in which we look (field of gaze)

- Field of gaze in a museum
 - The people around, the objects on the walls around you, etc.

Fred Wilson's *Guarded View*

- Forces people to notice the workers that are designed to blend in with their surroundings
- Low paid people are surveilling those who are admiring expensive or valuable objects, making sure that the objects are kept safe

The gaze and spectatorship focuses on address rather than reception

- The concept of The Spectator is about how particular positions are created by visuals
 - Address = the way that media triggers certain responses from particular demographics
 - Reception = how actual individuals understand visuals
 - together, both of these ways of examining visuals are an important part of understanding viewer experience
 - the gaze is a relational activity

Las Meninas, painted by Diego Velazquez in 1656

- External spectator = the implied position of the viewer according to the perspective in a particular work
- The Spectator position in Las Meninas is ambiguous, which was unusual compared to other paintings made in the same time
 - The princess and her attendants are not what Velasquez is looking at
 - The king's and queen's faces are reflected in the mirror, placing them in the same spot where the viewer stands
 - Jason Forago mentions that by Velasquez placing himself in the image looking out, he is "disrupting the circuit of power the otherwise draws all eyes to the princess" 107
 - introduces ambiguity to the implied spectator's position

POWER AND THE SURVEILLANCE GAZE

Modernity - the rise of social institutions and bureaucracies put in place to manage the growing populations of cities

- Surveillance is used by those institutions to discipline citizens
- Foucault- modern power *produces* subjects
 - "Power relations produce knowledge and particular kinds of citizens" (109)

Public shaming and execution practices before modern prisons

- Prison is indirect control
- Jeremy Bentham's panopticon penitentiary design

- Prisoners live in a constant state of knowing that they could be under surveillance at any time
- Internalizing the guards gaze forces prisoners to become self-regulating, even when nobody's watching
 - "The prison is like an automated machine that produces the experience of being watched at all times, even when nobody's watching" (110)
- *Modern Times*, Charlie Chaplin (1936)
 - Sneaks into bathroom for a smoke, film of boss watching
 - "Surveillance relies on the worker performing as if the disciplinary gaze is always present" (111)
 - Monitoring of online activity, production output tracking
- **Unless there is a crime or reason to do so, it is unlikely that all those hours of footage will ever be viewed by anyone**
 - To be effective, nobody has to even look at the footage, but the fact that someone *could* be looking is what keeps workers in line
 - NYPD mobile observation tower
 - iSee Manhattan
 - Charts locations of CCTV cameras in NYC
 - "The public field of gaze includes and even produces these kinds of counter gazes and forms of resistance as people become frustrated at being under surveillance" (111)
- Foucault also proposed that the modern state enacts its power on and through the body (biopower)
 - The state, in order to function properly, needs healthy individuals to work, fight wars, reproduce
 - The state "manages, orders, and catalogues bodies through physical training, social hygiene, public health, education, demography, census taking, and regulating reproductive practices."
 - Docile bodies - citizens who uphold a society's ideologies and laws by participating in an economy of discipline, internalizing conformity and improving themselves as a way to maintain the state (112)
- Practices of surveillance have led to particular kinds of "bodies" that have been deemed as "other" by the gaze
 - Simone Browne *Dark Matters: on the surveillance of blackness*
 - History of placing black subjects under surveillance (112)
 - Slave traders/owners
 - Theatre of surveillance-specific categories of human subjects are subject to heightened suspicion and surveillance
 - Racial profiling, "epidermal thinking"

GENDER AND THE GAZE

Psychoanalysis has played an important role in the understanding of spectatorship and the unconscious processes supporting looking practices

Psychoanalytic theories of spectatorship are speculative theories about how the film image and visual narrative offer particular positions of pleasure and power to the spectator

We are guided by unconscious feeling and desires we don't fully understand

Spectatorship theories are based on the idea that responses to film are in part unconscious with cinematic texts promoting emotions, memories and fantasies

Films and images are an interface through which we may work through the otherwise unknowable unconscious realm

Christian Metz focused not only on the film image and the narrative form of a film but also on the different components of film experience...social space of the cinema and its field of gaze included darkened theatre and projector behind head and technology of sound

Cinematic apparatus brought about experiences that generates spectator identification and pleasure

Locus of power in the field of the gaze is male viewing position

1975 "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" essay by Laura Mulvey - classical Hollywood narrative cinema situated viewers in an active position of dominant looking, relating women to passive role of image and object of that gaze

Patriarchal unconscious

Women appear as passive objects framed to show their bodies into parts to be sexualized

Male spectator being offered 2 kinds of subject position:

- 1) Position of camera which frames and controls the female body image or
- 2) That of an active male protagonist for whom female characters appear as objects of desire

Scopophilia (pleasure in looking)

Exhibitionism (pleasure in being looked at)

Voyeurism (pleasure in looking without being seen)

“Ways of Seeing” John Berger wrote that “in history of art men act and women appear” tradition of nude has almost exclusively involved men in role of active artist and women serving as models posed to optimize male spectator for viewing pleasure

Lack of representation of women artists in museums and markets

2011 there were 4 percent women artist represented in museums

Linda Nochlin - we should critique and revise what counts as “great art”

1980’s performance artists Lorraine O’Grady staged guerilla invasions at New York art world events and appeared in a tiara and a gown made of 180 pairs of thrift store gloves. Disrupting racial and class divides.

1980’s Calvin Klein brand produced print campaigns challenging conventions of male sexual representation

1992 ad with Mark Walberg and supermodel Kate Moss taken by Herb Ritts epitomizes how these campaigns paradoxically used the unclothed male to sell garments.

Masculine objects of sexualized gaze convey active masculinity

Bieber Calvin Klein poster - the women acts as a props. Bieber is the intended object of gaz, yet he remains in position of power.

Catherine Opie examined the display of subjectivity in everyday life

Ex. She took a self-portrait in 1993 where she turned away from the camera to reveal scratches in her back of 2 women holding hands to represent the pain and difficulty of having and achieving that dream of normative family life in a lesbian relationship

GAMING AND THE GAZE

FPS first person shooter games - aligning viewpoint with that of the game’s protagonist

Laid out in 3D graphic and individualized

Gaze is represented as all powerful

GamerGate- revealed the extent to which a surprisingly large number of participants in gaming communities would resort to threats of violence to keep the industry’s field of gaze intact and to censor criticism and deride alternatives such as games emphasizing social justice and strong female protagonists